

the peak

intergenerational movements issue

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"Toronto Blockade on March 12th, 2014" by Nicky Young
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Introducing... Intergenerational Movements

This spring, we are taking a look at intergenerational communities and networks of supports and struggle. By looking at the ways our movements welcome and do not welcome folks of all ages and locations, we hope to take part in a conversation about building long-term, sustainable cultures of resistance that are inclusive of families, caretakers, young people and elders. Part of this culture-building comes from learning about the triumphs and mistakes of past generations, while making space for new ones and stepping up to our responsibilities as leaders.

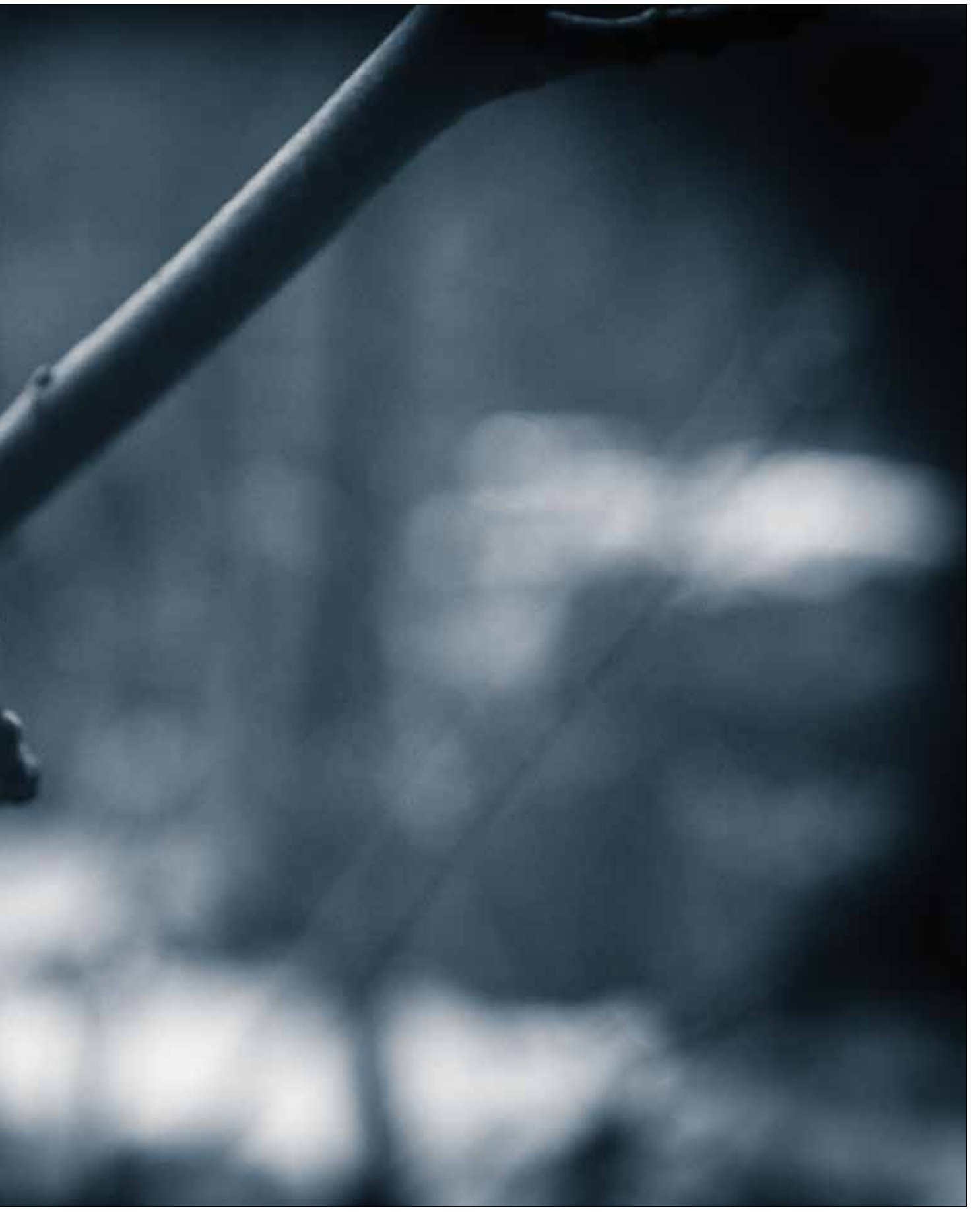
Many of the oppressive systems that operate around us function by isolating us from each other. Creating inclusive communities across generations defies capitalist logic of isolation, and allows us to draw from vibrant histories of resistance. From brand-new babies to wise grandmas, this issue aims to share a variety of perspectives on this topic.

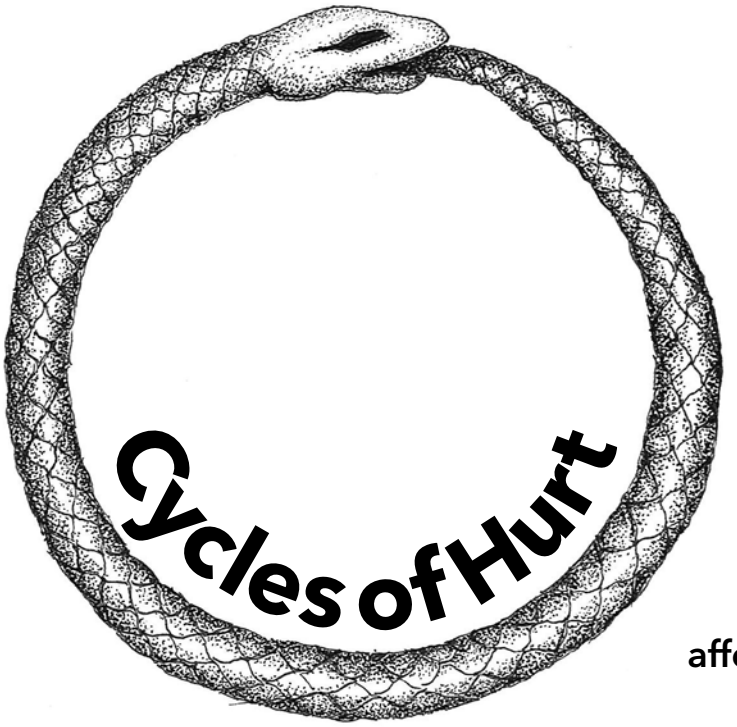
In this issue we feature a roundtable interview with three generations of a family from Grassy Narrows discussing their traditional trap lines (pg. 12). These pages alse contain musings on the joys and heartaches of committing to long term resistance in Guelph and Southern Ontario; the voices of parents struggling to find community and strength (page 38); and an animal rights activist's thoughts about organizing with youth (pg. 6); and more. As always, we feature news from struggles across Southern Ontario. Many perspectives are represented here, but even more are missing, like the voices of refugees, people of colour, trans* people, and other communities whose cultures help create intergenerational struggle by an incredible resilience in the face of systemic violence.

In the words of Myles Horton, who co-founded the Freedom Schools of the American south, "We are creating the future present for the new generation, from which they will make history. For these reasons, I think it is absolutely indispensable that [we] be secure, capable, and have a capacity for loving and for curiosity."

So read on,
The Peak Collective







Cycles of Hurt

How have generations of hurt affected our friendships today? Our author explores. by Anonymous

I'm kicking rocks down the train tracks, mad at myself and feeling terrible for having just yelled at my friend, who was balancing along the rail nearby. They are my best buddy and lover, and mostly we are really good to each other and work hard to break unhealthy dynamics in our lives. So what's going on with me right now? Why did I just yell at them? And where does this scary, hopeless feeling come from? It worries me deeply that, despite all we try and how hard we work to break away from the unhealthy things we've learned from the media or our parents about what relationships are 'supposed' to be like, we somehow repeat these ugly cycles in our relationships.

We step over a pile of creosote-soaked logs and dip carefully under the wire fence at the place the coyotes have dug out. Standing on an abandoned fuel storage tank, the seeping feeling of hopelessness rises in me again, mixing potently with my recollection that the groundwater below my feet carries a toxic plume from the plastics fire that happened up the road 17 years ago. I recall that at that time, I was living in a family where yelling was commonly a default form of communication. The land here has been poisoned for so long, and the ways we are raised can also be poisonous...

I do not hold these acknowledgements as excuses for acting badly toward my friend. I reject the idea that being hurt is a reason to hurt others. But I also want to ask, "What does it mean to grow up surrounded by so much hurt? If someone had not been hurt, would they still hurt others?" It's hard to think through this thought-experiment when applied to this society, which is already jammed with ideas about things like success, progress, power and survival being excuses to hurt other people.

In these cycles, some people keep hurting, and some keep being hurt, too. People are given different opportunities, depending on their power and privilege. Everyone has the ability to hurt others, but those with more power and privilege have a greater ability to do so. Some take advantage of their privilege to hurt, some don't. As well, everyone can be hurt, but those with less privilege are more vulnerable. Those who hurt others are perpetuating deeper cycles of hurt that permeate this culture. This is not to excuse hurtful behaviour, but an understanding of the cyclical nature of violence is critical if we seek to confront violence and oppression in society.

I am full of some pretty poisonous ideas about relationships. I'm taught that other people are owners of my body and about how to be a possession. I'm taught that loving someone involves control over them. It takes work to look inside ourselves and figure these things out, to unlearn hate and violence. My eyes settle on the branching patterns of a half-eaten sumac berry bunch, smiling at the thought that this pattern is mirrored in the alveoli sacs we carry in our lungs. I take a deep breath and tell my friend that I'm sorry.

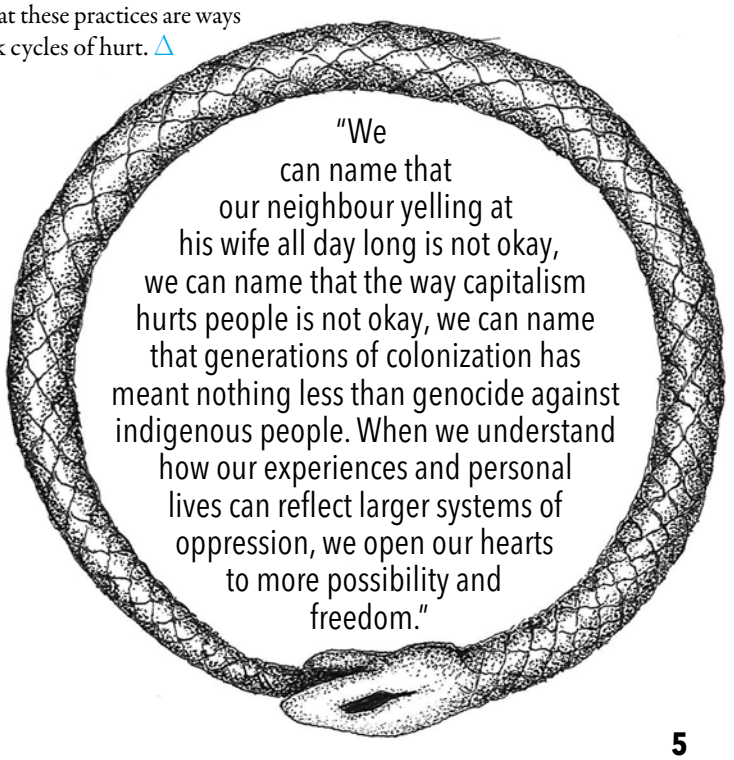
I ask my friend, "how are you feeling?" We have lots of practice treating each other well, making it an active intention every day. It's so relieving that a relationship can be about taking care of each other. It can be about gentleness, support, tenderness,

We seek to decipher these cycles so as to break free of them, to not blame others for our experience of being hurt. Out on the train tracks, we sit with these thoughts and feel resilient, even as we face the smoke stacked skyline and the huge amount of hurt and violence that exists – and is accelerating – in this world.

safety, what feels good, whatever comes up. We give each other permission to be free, to have other lovers. We give each other permission to find ourselves, which includes the dark and broken parts of us, too. We encourage reflection and change. Having this safe, strong base makes it easier to for us to talk about cycles of hurt and how they impact our relationships.

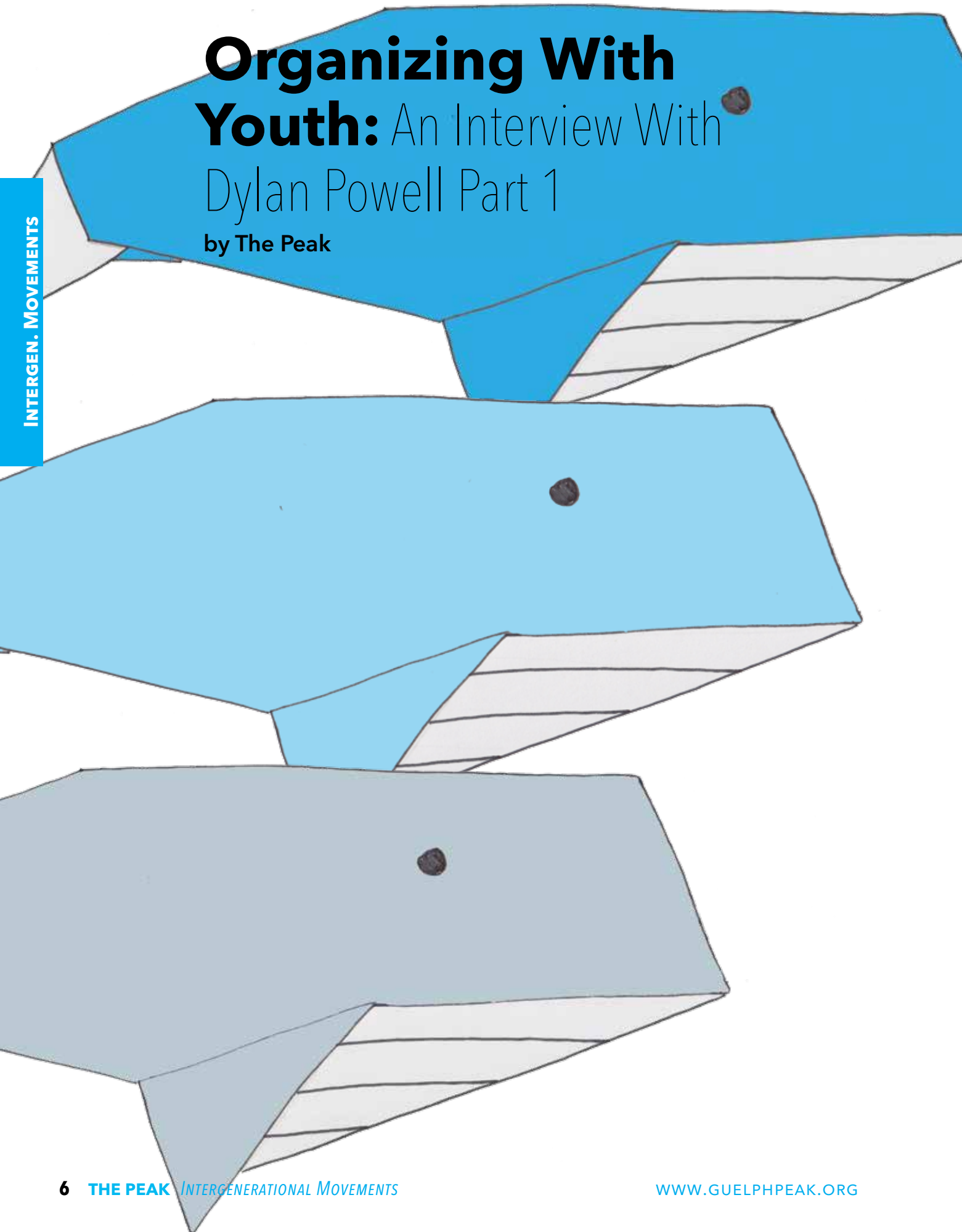
We talk about how complicated it can be to fully grasp these cycles. They are perpetuated through a lack of understanding of all the ways in which oppression and power contribute to our hurts. When we are unable to escape or fight these oppressions and without healthy relationships modelled in our lives, it can leave us not knowing anything else. We seek to decipher these cycles so as to break free of them, to not blame others for our experience of being hurt. Out on the train tracks, we sit with these thoughts and feel resilient, even as we face the smoke stacked skyline and the huge amount of hurt and violence that exists — and is accelerating — in this world.

We speak about how painful it can be for us to recognize the ways in which we oppress, hurt or are not sensitive to the feelings of others. It's easier to avoid self-reflection and self-criticism. These feelings mirror how hard it can be to face the toxic legacies in our communities, our bodies, and on the landscape around us. But it is so brave instead to say, "I can hurt someone, it's in me, and in fact, I've been taught to hurt others". These self-acknowledgements make more space to name or call out hurt on a larger scale. They help us feel less trapped in feelings like fear and shame, which are hard places from which to work towards change. We can name that our neighbour yelling at his wife all day long is not okay, we can name that the way capitalism hurts people is not okay, we can name that generations of colonization has meant nothing less than genocide against Indigenous people. When we understand how our experiences and personal lives can reflect larger systems of oppression, we open our hearts to more possibility and freedom. It involves humility and an acknowledgement of these cycles. I hold hope that these practices are ways to break cycles of hurt. △



Organizing With Youth: An Interview With Dylan Powell Part 1

by The Peak



Dylan Powell is an organizer in St. Catharines, Ontario. Co-Founder of Marineland Animal Defense, #OurScars and the Live Free Collective, Dylan is active in the animal and earth liberation movements, as well as involved in solidarity organizing with the Haudenosaunee of the Grand River, the migrant justice advocacy community and at risk youth in the Niagara Region. Dylan is a graduate of Brock University (Honours History) and a current Addiction Education student at McMaster University in Hamilton. Dylan has lectured and spoken across North America and runs workshops on youth advocacy and radical politics.

Marineland Animal Defense (MAD) is a campaign of concerned individuals determined to end animal captivity at Marineland. As a result of his involvement in MAD, Dylan is currently the target of a 1.5 million dollar SLAPP suit by Marineland Canada. SLAPP stands for Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation, and the legality of these lawsuits is currently being reviewed by the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

You've said in the past that it will be kids and not adults who will shut down Marineland. Why do you say that?

A lot of it has to do with recognizing that the target audience of a captive animal facility like Marineland, or really any other captive animal facility, is youth. The commercials are built upon youth identities —there are youth in the crowds, there are youth being kissed by animals — and they're being shown predominantly on networks where they're expecting children to watch.

Ninety percent of the revenue of captive animal facilities like Marineland is ticket sales. A large portion of that is contract based with schools through end of the year programs and classes, and with summer camps and programs. Marineland recognizes that kids drive their business; that kids drive the revenue, create the demand, force the parents to take them, and put schools in situations where they will take kids to this park which obviously has no educational value.

Parents are ultimately going to make the decision whether or not to take their kids there, but they want to create the demand and start it with the youth so kids are asking their parents — basically begging their parents —"Can we go to Marineland?" Can we go to Marineland? Can we go to Marineland?"

We didn't want to be bogged down with conflicts common in activist circles, such as ego and animosity around tactics so it was easy for us to say, "It's not going to be the activists who're going to shut down the facility, it's going to be the kids." Kids are playing a central role in opposing the park right now and have been for a very long time.

Kids have a reaction to animal captivity that's very emotional they look and see a lone orca in a tank and start crying. It's not academic based, it's not steeped in all these theories of tactics and strategy, it's visceral. So for us, focusing on the kids just made so much sense.

You said that kids have been playing a central role in the organizing. Can you be a little more specific? What kind of organizing have they been taking on?

The Marineland Animal Defense campaign began in 2011. We didn't have a lot in the way of intentional strategies at that point in youth advocacy, but we did try to create different types of spaces. So if the police,park owner or staff were going to be particularly hostile we'd basically create two scenarios: one side where people who were able to be in that kind of situation were, and another camp where people could be where they'd generally be left alone.

That lasted for about a year, and while we did have families and kids involved throughout, they felt comfortable coming, but they were put in this area to hold signs. We thought that was great, it's a step up from having no strategy whatsoever for including families or children, but it wasn't terribly empowering for kids.

Kids have a reaction to animal captivity that's very emotional – they look and see a lone orca in a tank and start crying. It's not academic based, it's not steeped in all these theories of tactics and strategy, it's visceral. So for us, focusing on the kids just made so much sense.

In 2012, we started getting a lot of news coverage. We moved down across sight line from where people walked into the park and we got louder, we got rowdier, and we noticed that it was actually kids who were the most impassioned —leading and creating chants, making the best signs, creating themes for demonstrations.

For the most part everyone who was involved had this idea that kids were just passively present. Because the crowds were big and because we didn't have a lot of structure it allowed for youth to claim space; that year there was a whole bunch of activity. Kids were writing to local papers, giving speeches at their schools and talking to their teachers and

principals. A lot of them got Marineland Canada and all captive animal facility trips dropped from school contracts. Then on October 7th 2012, there was a mass civil disobedience. A couple of hundred people entered the park and shut down the final dolphin show of the year. A lot of those people were actually kids.

So at the end of that season we sat back and took stock. We said "Look, kids are the target audience, kids are major players as far as leading any kind of opposition to this park." For us as a campaign, we can't go into schools and say "Hey, we think you should drop this park" because then we'll be up on a whole bunch of civil litigation dealing with contract law and destruction of their contracts and so on. But these kids were taking it upon themselves, so we really wanted to make a space for them to not only be able to be present, but actually to lead a demo.

When we opened the season in May 2013 we had a demonstration of about a thousand people and all of the speakers were kids. Kids actually set the theme — we had an origami whale theme because of one kid, Vijay. An ancient Japanese legend promises that anyone who folds a thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish by a crane, so Vijay's goal was to fold one thousand whales so he would be granted his wish that Marineland be closed down. The demonstration ended up being the largest in the history of opposition to Marineland, it was the largest animal advocacy demonstration in Canada since 1984, and it was super powerful and really great.



We've continued throughout to make that space for kids to be at the front of what's going on. We give them the space to criticize what's going on with our campaign or tactics, how things look, what we're doing theme-wise, what chants get said, all these other things.

There's a perception, at least in the community that I'm from and the communities that I tend to work with, that it's somehow improper to influence other people's kids in a political way. There's this idea that parents are the only ones who should instill values in their kids.

So who are these kids you work with? They would ask questions like how do they find out about this stuff? Do they come with their parents? Have they just heard about it? How does MAD actually conduct outreach to kids?

In response, I would tie it back to the different stages that I already talked about: making space, kids claiming space, and then putting kids right out front. In the beginning most of the kids who were coming out were with their families. Once kids started to actually actively claim space and the issue grew, we began to see more kids giving speeches at their high school or elementary school, and more and more kids coming to the demos.

It hasn't really been an intentional strategy on our part to outreach to kids. It's more about making space for kids to do what they want , to have a platform to speak, to have the support to speak so that they can talk to their peers. I think it's super disingenuous and it wouldn't be nearly as effective if we tried to get into elementary or high schools and do that outreach ourselves. I'm 29 years old and I probably am completely out of touch with people that age. As far as outreach strategies, what we have set up right now has been the most successful for us.

What are some of the challenges for you as an organizer, or for the organization as a whole, when it comes to working with youth? What are some of the barriers youth face to getting involved?

In a lot of corporate-civil litigation and corporate repression you'll see corporations survey the landscape, sue or get an injunction order against a lot of people, and they'll basically do their own intelligence gathering and try to find weak links. We didn't want that to happen, we didn't want organizers who have families, who have kids, who have jobs that they could potentially lose — who basically

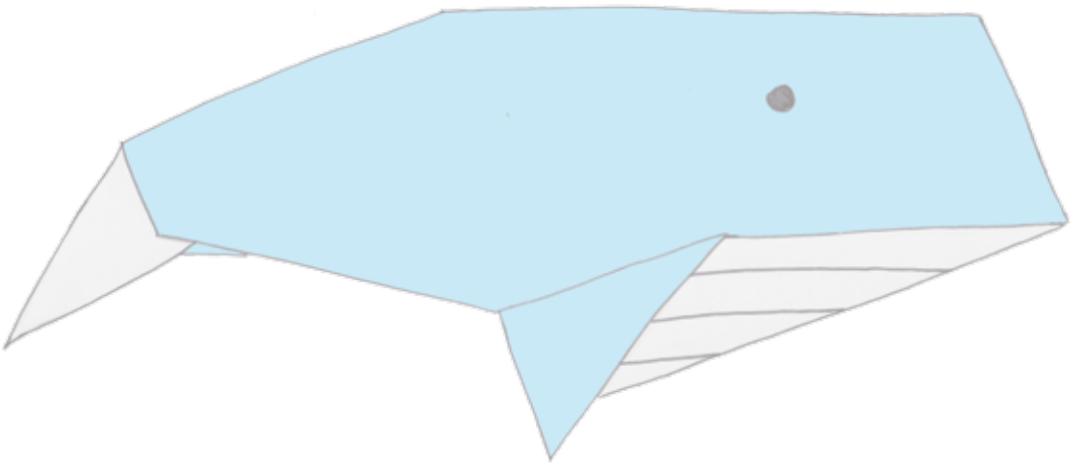
have a lot on the line — to be the people who would get sued. When this campaign started I was 27 years old, I don't have kids myself, I've got pretty limited means and I've lived under the threat of lawsuits since I was a child through a bunch of history with my own family. So I filled that role. This is part of us recognizing the barrier for families who want to get involved. We do everything in our power to ensure that nothing comes down on kids or on families.

A great example of other barriers: Carrie is a youth down here — she's 14 years old but probably going on 30 years old — and she's been really involved in the demonstrations. Her parents were against her coming to the demonstrations, they didn't really see the point of it. She actually spoke at the opening day demonstration in May 2013 and her mum and dad both came out and filmed the whole thing. I gave her mum a hug and she was in tears. She was so proud of her daughter for standing up on an issue and speaking in front of all those people. Sometimes it is hard to get youth out because parents are resistant but when they see kids are committed, gaining skills and being part of a community as a result of it, you'll generally see that resistance goes way down.

We've had politicians and other people show up to demonstrations where it's been an all-kid platform and try to grab the mic and advance their own agenda. We've always fought back really hard against that and if people try to do those things we basically just tell them that they're not really welcome and that they can go and create their own platform somewhere else.

We've caught flak from some people over how we've included children. We've had politicians and other people show up to demonstrations where it's been an all-kid platform and try to grab the mic and advance their own agenda. We've always fought back really hard against that and if people try to do those things we basically just tell them that they're not really welcome and that they can go and create their own platform somewhere else. But for the most part it's been an extremely positive experience. The largest demonstrations have been the ones that have included kids the most, there's a big branching out effect when kids are empowered and take a leading role.

Continued on page 35



Talking About Ageism in our Movements:

An Interview With Sterling Stutz

Sterling discusses some of the ways ageism within activist movements can lead to disengagement, and the importance of intergenerationality to maintain long term, sustainable resistance. by The Peak

What are some obstacles you encounter when you work with people of an older generation? How do they treat you? What are some of the tensions?

I think I used to encounter more obstacles than I do today, for a variety of reasons. When I first started organizing I was 18 years old, a freshman in college, and had a hard time trusting my own opinions and getting other people to listen to me. I've had people disrespect me because of my age. I can remember one time that I was actually told to, "respect my elders", by someone only a few years older than me. That shook me, disagreeing with me for my opinion is one thing, but that person shutting me down for simply not giving them the respect they thought they deserved for being born a bit earlier than me made me feel extremely uncomfortable and devalued. We need to stop demanding respect from those that are younger than us. Respect is something that is built; it cannot be demanded.

> The strongest and most strategic victories are those based on long-term, sustainable campaigns, which are not won in a one, five or even ten year period. We need elders, and youth in our fight if we are ever going to accomplish anything noteworthy.

It never felt good when after I said something, someone responded with "Oh wow you're so young!" I didn't like being reminded of how young I was. Sure I was younger than most people in the room, but I also had all sorts of other experiences and thoughts that weren't wrapped in the number of years I had been on this planet. I love working with and learning from people who are more experienced. I feel really grateful to have worked, and continue to work, with so many strong and committed people. Hearing their stories and experiences has helped to shape my political analysis, helping me to learn from past struggles and lessons.

What do you think of people who used to be radical/militant/committed and are not any longer? Why do you think they are not as involved as they used to be? What do you think about what they're doing now?

I think that radical organizing, as it exists in southern Ontario at least, is fairly unsustainable, and I have no judgement to those who have decided that they either cannot or do not wish to continue their work in the same way they did. Nor do I think necessarily that there is only one way that a committed activist

or organizer interacts with the world, and everything outside of that is less legitimate. I think that there are any number of ways to remain committed to political struggles that arn't the typical going to meetings and attending events that we normally see in organizing communities. As people's lives change, so do their commitment levels and possibly their interests in different issues and tactics. Hopefully any changes are based in personal interests, and remaining involved in other ways, and not for lack of support in becoming a parent, or financial necessity. Political organizing can be really difficult, traumatic and unsustainable. I have seen that just in the six years since I started organizing. I think that we need to build more supportive movements, more intergenerational movements. Too many people are leaving political organizing because they don't have support with their kids, and that's not a good enough reason. That's a fault on the rest of us, for not getting it together enough. I think there's work that can be done, but I also think that we aren't going to get anywhere if we judge people who decide they want to take a break or stop organizing. People need to be free to make their own decisions, and hopefully they will have the support they need to continue the meaningful work we are all engaged in.

If we really value creating an intergenerational movement, then we will stop valuing things like productivity (a very capitalist value) over things like children and stop valuing experience over learning.

Is it important that communities and/or struggles or movements be intergenerational? Why or why not?

The best advice I think I got as I started organizing was to listen to people who have been doing this longer than you have and take what they say to heart. If we do not have an intergenerational movement, we are doomed to keep making the same mistakes. We need to build on the work of those that have come before us, not simply ignore it as 'outdated'. The strongest and most strategic victories are those based on long-term, sustainable campaigns, which are not won in a one, five or even ten year period. We need elders, and youth in our fight if we are ever going to accomplish anything noteworthy.

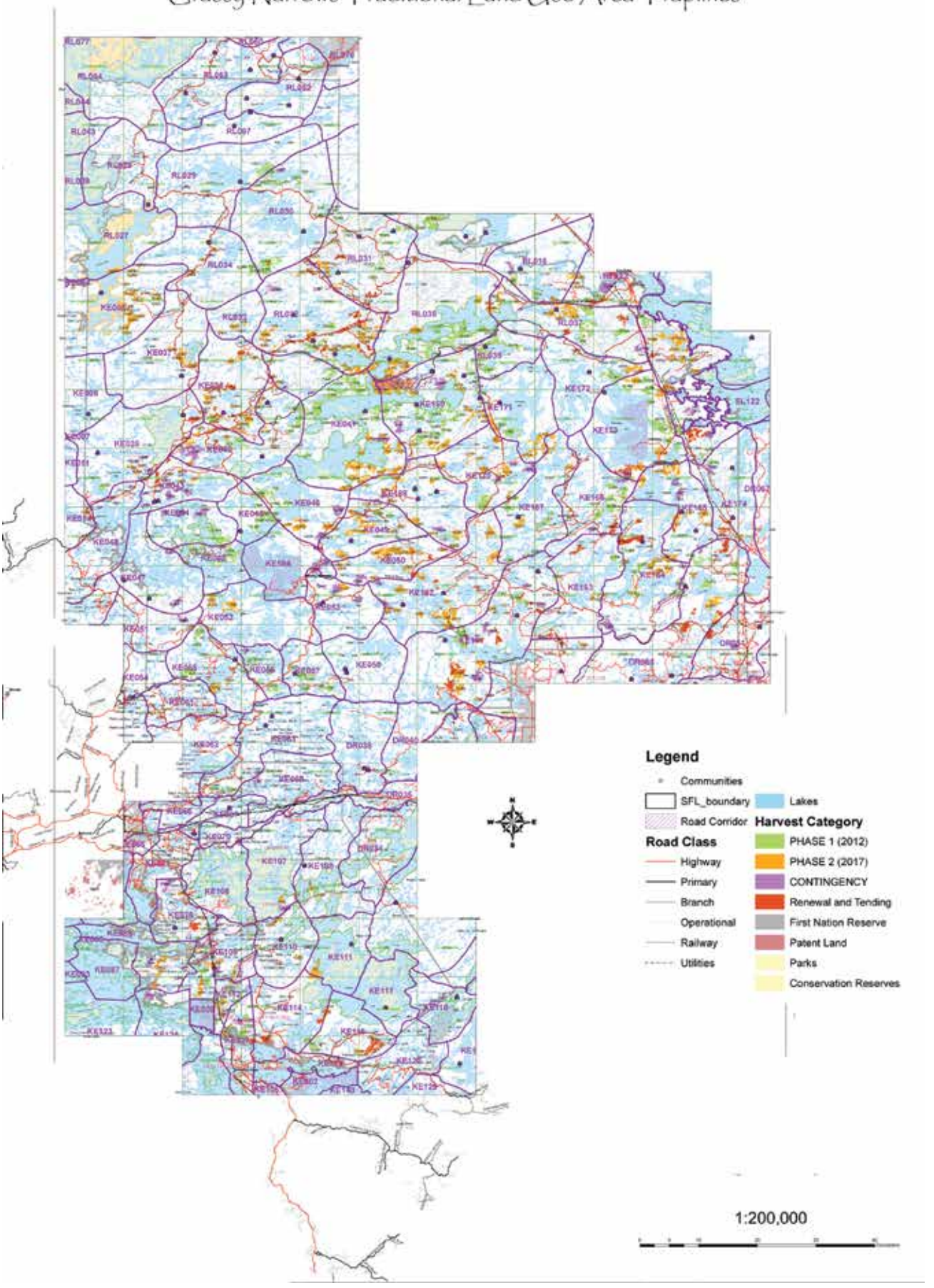
Are there communities you've worked with in which people of all ages, and people with and without kids, manage to work together? How do they do it? Why do you think it's so hard for so many of us?

I think it takes a change of values. If we really value creating an intergenerational movement, then we will stop valuing things like productivity (a very capitalist value) over things like children and stop valuing experience over learning. Willingness to have children in meetings, coloring in the corner or sitting on laps, often adds a sense of chaos to meetings and can sometimes take away from a group's productivity. But for that parent or guardian to be able to attend that meeting with their child might be really important, and they might not have been able to attend otherwise. The meeting will likely still be able to accomplish tasks, but maybe take a bit longer.

What do you think causes people to drop out of activism/organizing?

I think that we often do not talk enough about trauma in organizing and the toll that takes on fostering unsustainability in our organizations. The work that many of us are engaged in is exhausting and difficult and heart-breaking, and there are often few opportunities to attempt to heal ourselves. Battling against the oppressive forces in the world, while also worrying about personal problems such as making rent, family life, personal relationships, etc, is a lot to carry for each of us. And sometimes that means people need a break, sometimes that mean people cannot carry on, and I think that's ok. We cannot have a truly sustainable, intergenerational movement without creating the space for people to say "I am not okay" or, "I need a break" or, "I don't want to do that anymore." No matter what that means for the other people in their communities, we need to be able to be honest about ourselves as people if we are going to accomplish anything. It is absolutely necessary for our priorities to shift from a focus on productivity to healing, otherwise we are simply applying capitalist values (just like the respect mentioned earlier in this interview) to our own organizing and exacerbating the problem. △

Whiskey Jack Forest
2012-2022 Forestry Management Plan
&
Grassy Narrows Traditional Land Use Area Traplines



On the Land

A Grassy Narrows family talks about the history and future of their relationship with trapline and the lands of Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek Territory. Interview by Alex Hundert

INTRODUCTION

On February 9th, 2014, Maryanne Swain finally received word from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) that she had been approved as the new title holder for trapline KE056, located in Ontario Forestry Management Unit (FMU) #490, also known as the Whiskey Jack Forest.

The Whiskey Jack Forest roughly overlaps with the Traditional Territory of Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek, also known as Grassy Narrows First Nation, and has been more or less protected from industrial logging for over a decade by the longest standing blockade in the country.

In April of this year, the MNR's ten year Forestry Management Plan (FMP) for the Whiskey Jack Forest comes into effect, which means that for the first time since the blockade went up in 2002, the heart of Grassy Narrows Territory in northwest Ontario is under immediate threat from industrial-scale clearcut logging operations.

A March 1st statement from a new Grassy Narrows Youth Group says, "The new clearcutting plan threatens our home, including lands that our decade long blockade has protected. Our community's leadership, both grassroots and Band Council, have firmly rejected the new cut plan and contested the Government's right to make decisions regarding our Territory."

One of the two Youth organizers quoted in the statement is Edmond Jack, Maryanne Swain's grandson. His mother, Maryanne's daughter, is Chrissy Swain, a former Grassy Narrows Youth leader and a founding member of the Grassy Narrows Women's Drum Group, who, along with one of her sisters, is often credited with the act of starting the blockade back in the winter of 2002. She is a tireless land defender and advocate for her community.

Jack, in the Youth Group Statement, says, "Not only does the plan threaten my family trapline, but it also threatens the traditional knowledge of future generations who cannot yet speak for themselves."

Trapline KE056 falls on the south shores of Keys Lake, a pristine, spring-fed lake that was spared from the industrial mercury poisoning of the river system in the 1960s, from which new generations in Grassy Narrows continue to suffer. This past summer, as part of the Annual Grassy Narrows Youth Gathering, there was a day-long blockade of the roadway

to Keys Lake, and a declaration of the long-term intent on the part of the community's Youth and grassroots land defenders to protect the lake.

The FMP has six separate cut blocks scheduled for clearcutting within the Swain family trapline, and another six in the adjacent trapline. One of the clearcut blocks will tear out the heart of the Swain's trapline, spanning from Keys Lake to the neighbouring Tom Lake. Others appear, from the available maps, to engulf at least two of the natural springs that feed Keys Lake.

Ontario's new ten year logging plan will clearcut over 500 square kilometres of the Whiskey Jack Forest, with over fifty percent of Grassy Narrows lands having already been previously logged.

I had the opportunity to sit down with Chrissy Swain, 34 year old, and Edmond Jack,19 year old, as well as with Maryanne's father, 78 year old Jim Swain, to ask about the trapline — land to which the family has been connected for as long as they can remember. I consider myself tremendously privileged to have had the opportunity to conduct these interviews, write this article, and work with this family. To all of the Swains and their families, miigwetch.

During these interviews, I asked about the process of (re)claiming the trapline, its history, and the significance of its being brought back into active use by the family.

INTERVIEW

Chrissy Swain: I know that the area that [my mom] asked for, she asked for it because we have family history there. My grandfather was living there as a kid, and I think she had to get affidavits to prove that our family was in that area.

[I just know] stories that my grandpa told, of him being a kid over there. One of the stories he told was about how one time his mom sent him for sugar, and that's where he had to walk from, from there to the Hudsons Bay [store], and he slept with a relative close by and then the next day walked all the way back to there.

[Keys Lake and that area] is probably just one of the places [his family] stayed. Our people were everywhere.

I've heard some stories about that area being a sacred place, that that place was healing because of the spring where the water comes from the earth into that lake, and the medicine that's all around that lake. And people used to do ceremonies there, and it's an area where people went fasting. Those are the kinds of things that I heard about that place.

Edmond Jack: I've got my trappers' certificate, and I think that when the time comes that my grandma won't be able to use it anymore, then I will be the one who takes that trapline in my name.

It gave me a sense of relief to know that I'll have that when I get older.

The area where that trapline is, that lake The water there is the cleanest water that we have today. None of our other lakes are as clean as that one, because of all the spring water streams that go into it.

The reason that the sturgeon are so sacred is because when they swim at the bottom, people would pray to the sturgeon and honour it like one of our own people. They can't walk on the land like we can, but they stay under the water near the bottom of the lake, and they're kind of like the ones who look after the land under there. They're not much different from us. They know medicines that we could never reach, probably. And he also said that whole area is, like my mum said, a place for healing and medicines, where people would go and find that medicine that they need to clean themselves out. There are all kinds of cedar that grows around there. It's just a really beautiful place.

I remember my grandpa telling me that people would go over there and fast on an island close by there, where they would go and drop off a young person who was going through their rites of passage. They would sit there for four days.... There are lots of things that I've heard about Keys Lake. For me, it's just a really sacred area.

The trapline that my grandma got is right on Keys Lake. It's almost like an asset or something, to be able to use that place... I'd just really like to be able to really take after the lake and keep it as clean as I could.

Jim Swain: I don't know exactly how it started... how would I go about [explaining] that?

When Maryanne decided that she would find out if it was possible for her to apply., they wanted its history, the trapline. But we didn't know where to start. So, when I went to Kenora to talk to the person, he said, "how much do you know about it?"

I said, "My grandfather owned it, owned the trapline, and worked it for a while, for years."

Before that though, [there was an old guy from the community] who had [the trapline on] Scenic Lake already, he owned it. And he asked my grandpa if they could trade traplines, and at the same time he offered some money, not much. That's how it started... That's when they signed the agreement. It kept the old man happy. And after that [Scenic Lake] passed on to my Dad and my uncle, and then I owned it after. I don't know how many years we trapped there.

So they asked me the questions, and I said, "I was there. I know the area very good."

I told them that it would be great if one of us could get it back.

I said, "how would I go about it?" He said, "write an affidavit." I didn't know anything about affidavits. But anyway, they explained to me how to write it, even though I made a mistake. The lawyer who looked at it said, "you were supposed to do that in front of me, not on your own." "I've never done this before," I said. But anyway, they accepted it.

And [the "white guy"] was also fighting for it, he almost got it. But after about a year, they called Maryanne and they were happy with the affidavits, so that's how she got that trapline.

Other than that, I don't know what sort of things to tell you, but we did a lot of trapping at Keys Lake when I was young.

We went all around that area, all the way back to Wonderland [Lake]. There used to be Caribou in that area. But after the road came, and other things, they went further north.

It was hard, really, for me [to tell them about Keys Lake specifically], because I've been all over the place. I trapped with my Uncle in Wilcox [Lake]. Then I went with my brother in Kilburn [Lake]. By paddle it used to take two weeks to get up there. Then I went with my other uncle to Oak Lake. But the main one was Keys Lake that she wanted me to talk about.

Anyway, the affidavits helped, and she got it. Now it's up to her and Ed to look after it.

Chrissy Swain: I feel confident that my son is going in the right direction by taking his own initiative and learning to hunt, fish and trap, and learn medicines. And I'm confident that he's going to use that land in a good way, to teach his kids and raise them on the land, because that's a big part of our ways that's been missing. It makes me proud to hear my son say that he wants to protect that place and to keep it as clean as possible for my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren. That's my hope — that those teachings and that way of life will be carried on.

Edmond Jack: For me, when I do have kids, I could only wait until they get older and hope that they would take in everything that I could teach them, whatever I know by then, to carry on that way of life.

When [future generations] are young, I won't be able to interact with them as much. But once some of them learn how to do these things, it's there, in that age group, and it gives me a hope that more young people will take up these things and pick up on lost ways of life.

There are still a lot of things for people to learn.

Our Anishinabe way of life is so shattered; there are just pieces all over the place. Some places have the ceremonies, some places have our traditional ways of hunting, some places have our traditional way of living — they know how to survive in the bush.... The more that we try to enforce these things in our community, if we can bring back our ceremonies and our other, more down-to-earth ways of living, I think it would bring a lot of good things into the community.

Jim Swain: I always liked that area. But then, it was good to see different places. It wasn't long before I got to know what that guy gave us — Scenic [Lake]. I was really young that time.

It seemed like it used to be, for me anyways, it seemed to be a lot of freedom. There was no vehicles, there was nothing or anything going by. Then all of a sudden, when the roads came in, that kind of... I don't know, it just seemed too civilized.

I guess I thought about travelling on frozen ice, or making portages, having to cut across — we went through all that.

Believe it or not, sometimes you hear strange noises at night... Of course now it's getting, like I said, with too many machinery, that you don't hear them anymore. You used to.

There was one time I was coming out of the house, just at Keys Lake, where the springs open on to the shore there. I heard something, like someone was whistling loud... I stood there for a while and then walked my way to the shore, and it seemed like that's where that sound came from, from the open water. It was just a beaver coming up to the surface. And then every time his tail would go up and his head would go up and he'd make that high pitched sound — it's very loud. I don't really know how to describe it, but it's like someone is whistling loud.

It makes me proud to hear my son say that he wants to protect that place and to keep it as clean as possible for my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren. That's my hope – that those teachings and that way of life will be carried on.

That's what my grandfather told me. I was going to go back to school. He said, "No, wait two years before you go back to school. First learn about trapping. There won't be that many jobs there all the time."

Me and my cousin there, at Scenic one evening, around midnight, we heard what's called the Howling Owl. "What's that," he said? "You never heard that before?" "No," he said. And I said it in Ojibway — it's a Howling Owl. After we went around that bay, that's where our log cabin was. It was a good sleep....

These are all the sounds that you hear in the trapline, especially in the spring. And in the fall, I like in the fall, you can hear owls. We used to sit outside, around the fire, and listen to the predators coming out during their night hunt.

Keys Lake was one of the main routes for trappers that came down from further up — Sidney Lake, Kilburn. They'd stop by the Hudson's Bay then go try to get to Macintosh where the school was.

I used to have a trapline house that used to be the main stop. They always stopped, sometimes for a couple days, and carry on to wherever they were going. I wrote that down [in the affidavit], how the trappers used to be, that it was a main route, going to Sidney Lake and all over the place.

I think the most interesting part of trapping was moving — you know when the ice starts breaking up, and moving away with the current — sometimes you have to go through that...These were the adventures I remember.

[In the future], I don't think it will be as easy, I don't know how to say it; there's too many — it's gotten too civilized. There's so much coming in and out of there, at Keys Lake all the way back to Wonderland. And there's summer cottages over there. I know I really don't care for it. It's not like the old days. You didn't hardly see anyone on your trapline.

I was 16 or 17 years old. I travelled by myself in mid winter, in mid January, from Anishinabe Lake. There were no roads, nothing. I came down Oak Lake, across that little crossing at Oak Lake Falls. I knew there was a little trappers' cabin there but I didn't know if anyone would be there, and I was all by myself, just a young lad. But I made it through there. The people that were there happened to be my uncles and they were happy to see me.

The next morning I was going to go. They said, 'You'd better not go, it's cold out there and you're not dressed right. Yesterday it was warm and you were travelling with the sun, but today it's not like that. It'll be nicer tomorrow.' So I stayed that day and the next morning I went, and came to Grassy. But after that, I got to like where I travelled by myself. The only thing is that I always made sure that I never got caught alone out there in a storm without a cabin. But I was just lucky I guess.

It would be good for the young fellas to learn, I would think anyway. Cause you never can tell: there might be a time where it will be something like the depression, I don't know, and at least you'll be ready for it, if you've learned to be a trapper. That's what my grandfather told me. I was going to go back to school. He said, "No, wait two years before you go back to school. First learn about trapping. There won't be that many jobs there all the time." I got to enjoy trapping.

Because of the things that I've seen growing up and the things that I see now, I feel like the only way that we can always remember who we are as Anishinabe people is to have this land and be able to use it.

It's the things that you learn, I guess. I didn't really make my own snowshoes, but I patched them up. I made my own lacings. I learned that. That was something that surprised me. I didn't know that I could — I used to watch how they laced them. One day I was out around Slant Lake area and my snowshoes broke, I had to get new lacing. So Denis, he's my uncle but not too close, he had a moose hide, so I fixed it up. No one had shown me, but I'd seen them do it a couple of times, and I did that. Got some water and laid it out in the cold, take all the moose's fur out and then scrape it. It comes out nice if it's frozen. I was surprised, it was the first time id tried it. I did ok the first one, but I did it real good on the second. 'I didn't know you could mend snowshoes,' my uncle said. I didn't know either.

I told my grandpa, 'I fixed my snowshoes, no one had shown me'. He said, 'They talk about people having gifts. That's your gift. No one showed you, you just knew automatically.'

Chrissy Swain: What I see is that it's always been a fight for our way of life. Because of the things that I've seen growing up and the things that I see now, I feel like the only way that we can always remember who we are as Anishinabe people is to have this land and be able to use it. Something that puts that pride inside of us is being able to go out on the land and go out on the lakes and fish and hunt and to be out in the forest and be able to connect.

I do see a big change from when I was a kid. There are kids that are aware of what's going on. People always say that we've lost a lot of our ways, but I want to stop saying that we've lost that, because I feel it's always there, and that's what we've got to protect is what's there, for our kids. They look around and they see people moving and people

For me doing this isn't just about protecting the land, it's about reviving our people, bringing that spirit back to our people. And that's what's going to bring the spirit back to our people, is to keep this land.

saying this is not right. When I was a kid I don't remember seeing that. [But] I do remember feeling it: 'This is not right. Why do we live this way?'

I remember being eight years-old, walking down the road and looking at our houses, saying 'Why do we have to live like this?' Because I think I was kind of already aware of what living in a town or a city was like, from visiting my mom, or seeing that they had running water, that the grocery store was right there. And I was like, 'Why is it harder for us? Why does it feel like this?'

I know there's a proposed clearcut area right in the middle of our trapline, and I know for sure that they're not going to cut in there.

For me doing this isn't just about protecting the land, it's about reviving our people, bringing that spirit back to our people. And that's what's going to bring the spirit back to our people, is to keep this land.

I see that it's slowly moving, since the blockade began. There are more young people that are going for their trappers' licenses, that are interested in being on the land. You see and hear about a lot of young men that are going out in groups, fishing or hunting together. You hear of and know women that are like, 'let's go blueberry picking,' 'let's go get cedar.' So that's way more than what was in my time.

To me, protecting this land is being successful. Even if it's just little steps, right now today we can say there's been a little bit more movement. If we keep going, more is going to come for our kids and for our grandchildren.

Edmond Jack: I think having that trapline kind of gives me a stronger place to stand. I know there's a proposed clearcut area right in the middle of our trapline, and I know for sure that they're not going to cut in there. But if they cut in other places it's still going to have an effect.

To me, stopping the clearcuts is really important because if they do cut all the places that I've seen on that map, a lot of damage is going to be done and it's just going to make sustaining the trapline harder. Animals that we trap and hunt, they have really big territories — some of them are narrow and long, and some of them are wide. And if you cut one area out then that whole thing is going to change. Some of them are going to leave or die. It would pretty much suck the life dry. Our trapline would be depleted. It would almost be pointless to have a trapline if there's nothing to do out there. Clearcutting companies come in and when they cut down the trees they're destroying our way of life. I guess having the trapline makes me feel like I have no choice but to fight.

CONCLUSION

The statement from the Grassy Narrows Youth Group concludes with the following:

> "Our People have been dealing with the impacts of logging for decades. Our rivers have been poisoned and many traplines have been destroyed. Now, still dealing with mercury poisoning (from the Dryden Paper Mill's industrial dumping in the 60s), and facing new threats from mining expansion in Asubpeeschoseewagong Territory, the Government is coming back for our trees.

Over the years, Grassy Narrows has been fortunate enough to have support from some Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and organizations in Ontario and across Turtle Island. This spring, that support will likely be more important than ever and Grassy Narrows organizers expect to call on renewed support from allies. Please be ready to answer our call and to back us up." Δ

The Importance of Adult Friends & Mentors in a Child's Life

This article speaks to the ways in which developing a long term, consistent relationship with a child can be beneficial for children, caregivers and culture-building. by Matt Soltys

Transitioning from being a full-time activist to being a full-time primary parent has led me to reflect on the difference between activism and culture-building as ways of meaningfully contributing to the world. Both are necessary. We need social and political action to protect the earth and support people's freedom. We also need a radically different culture to take root and flourish, to move towards a healthier life on earth.

I would like to make a case for non-parents to be friends, role models, and mentors in the lives of the kids they know. Building a healthy, long-term, intergenerational culture involves raising children who will be an antidote to the dominant culture. This responsibility cannot fall to parents alone.

For the parents' sake, parenting comes with challenges that can be alleviated by the support of other adults. Many primary/at-home parents face isolation and a lack of meaningful time with oneself, with their partner, and with other adults. All three of these are vital and having childcare support makes a large impact on the parent's life. But beyond that, the real beneficiaries are the children who have a wider range of adults in their life to learn from.

I have often seen children better absorb a lesson or discipline (that wasn't your train, these snacks are for sharing for everyone, that kid is still on the slide and if you go down they'll get hurt, etc.) from an adult other than their parent. Kids are used to their parents telling them what to do and not do, and used to pushing these boundaries. Being informed of boundaries etc. by a respected non-parent can sometimes reach a child in a unique way. Children need to learn about the world from a wide variety of people, not just their parents.

Also, parents have a lot of chores and work to do. They don't have the time or energy to provide all the stimulating experiences that young children crave. With a spectrum of adults hanging out with the child, the child has a much wider set of experiences, they see more of the world and more types of human interactions, and thus grow more.

I think a long-term consistent relationship with a child is a meaningful way to change the world, but I wouldn't label it activism. I see it more as culture building, because that child will grow to be shaped by their early experiences, and whether or not they become 'activists', they will contribute to a healthier culture.

I think a long-term consistent relationship with a child is a meaningful way to change the world, but I wouldn't label it activism.I see it more as culture building

Imagine a relationship where a loving, fun, engaging, thoughtful adult hangs out with a child on a more or less weekly basis over the course of a few years. This childless adult friend has the energy and time to match the child's enthusiasm

and energy level, to go on adventures that instill a sense of wonder and awe, to ask great questions, to temper frustrating dynamics between the child and their parents, and to teach them an infinite variety of things, both directly and indirectly.

> Children need to learn about the world from a wide variety of people, not just their parents.

Or imagine that instead of a weekly basis, one adult sees the child every two weeks, and one or more adults also have a similar relationship with the child. Informally we can consider these relationships as friendships; if we want to speak more formally these can also be considered mentorships. Taken further, this would be the basis of a rich and varied intergenerational learning society that many de-schooling/unschooling advocates are trying to create.[1]

I would like to encourage readers without children to think about the kids you know, even peripherally (kids make friends easily) and consider fostering a relationship with them. Heck, the parents might even pay you for childcare. You could take them to a playground, a forest, a farm, a festival, your backyard, the library, a wood shop, a bus ride to a place they've never been, or anything you can possibly imagine.

For example, for several years I would hang out with my friend's child. We built bridges and climbed trees along the river, read subversive Earth-saving kids books while laying on the river bank, went apple picking at a friend's orchard, walked the cliffs at the Guelph wood squat, and hung out at his house playing games. We both mightily enjoyed our friendship; I vividly remember each of our hangouts. And I was only one of a handful of interesting adults whose influence he got to soak in and learn from.

For a relatively low involvement of time one can make a lasting impact in a child's life, tangibly increasing the chances that one more child will grow to be an empowered, loving, critical thinking adult in a world that is in short supply.

Books like *Don't Leave Your Friends Behind: Concrete Ways to Support Families in Social Justice Movements and Communities* explore, ways to help parents feel included in their community, and gives them time to do what they want to do with their lives besides parenting. Seen from another angle, these relationships are just as beneficial and even therapeutic for the caregiver. As an older friend to a child you get to see yourself and the world from a refreshing perspective, your own inner child gets to come out and play, you get to bask in the wonder, sincerity and total honesty of a child, and you usually have more fun than you have with other adults.

The lack of intergenerational connections, even between people 5 to 10 years apart in age, is a serious and fatal absence in North American radical communities. This absence sees older activists fade away because the younger crowd doesn't get them, and condemns each new generation to commit the same crippling mistakes. If we put no work into relationships with youth and supporting families, then we do nothing to cultivate the next generation, and activists of today become elders to no one. △

1 For more information look up Field Day by Matt Hern, or anything by John Holt and John Taylor Gatto.

A Guilt-Free Winter:
Reflections on Burnout

In this article, the author discusses how they came to recognize the effects of burnout; and the steps they took to prioritizing self care and feel okay about it. by Devyn

Admitting burnout has been a difficult thing for me. I was having a conversation with a lover one day and he used the term burnout in reference to the feelings I was describing, which at the time caught me off guard. Lately, I've been using the term in confidence to describe where I'm at. Over the past year, I've been coming out of a very overwhelming period of peak anxiety in my life, which has led me to reflect a lot on personal sustainability in activism.

I became aware that I was living with consistent anxiety a few years ago while living in (what I consider to be) one of the largest radical political hubs in the country, the city known to most as Montreal. I started to notice the anxiety I was carrying around with me daily when I had taken on a lot at once. I was part of a grassroots indigenous solidarity collective, hosting and producing content for a couple community radio shows, going to demos often, facilitating various workshops and trainings, and more. I started meeting some of the Montreal-based organizers I had admired from afar. I felt like I was finally becoming part of the radical political scene in the city, like I was contributing to local organizing in a meaningful way. My activist resume was looking quite full and impressive, which made me feel good about myself. I felt valuable and self-assured in my contributions to struggles that are important to me. My involvement in activism made me feel worthy, legitimate, interesting and valuable.

My identity became very wrapped up in what I was involved in politically and I began to judge others around me who I thought weren't doing enough. I had placed so much pressure on myself to go beyond my capacity in my involvement with activism, I expected those around me to be willing to do the same. I was also grappling with questions around queer identity, juggling a romantic relationship, family issues, school, and activism, and as the most recent Quebec student movement was well underway. While the student strike made for a very exciting time to be organizing, everything I was involved in began to pile up and feel heavy. I started to notice symptoms of intense anxiety and my involvement in community organizing started to feel like more of an obligation than inspiration. I could no longer deny or hide the fact that I was not okay.

I started to notice the anxiety I was carrying around with me daily when I had taken on a lot at once.

Even though I was having a hard time that winter, I pushed myself to be involved in the strike beyond my capacity. To be on the streets daily, taking part in economic disruption and direct action, while keeping up with the other activism I was involved with. After a series of terrifying run-ins with riot cops and pushing myself too hard, my anxiety peaked and at one point became completely unmanageable, extremely overwhelming, isolating, and scary. My relationship to ideas of productivity and my involvement in organizing had become unsustainable for me and I plummeted.

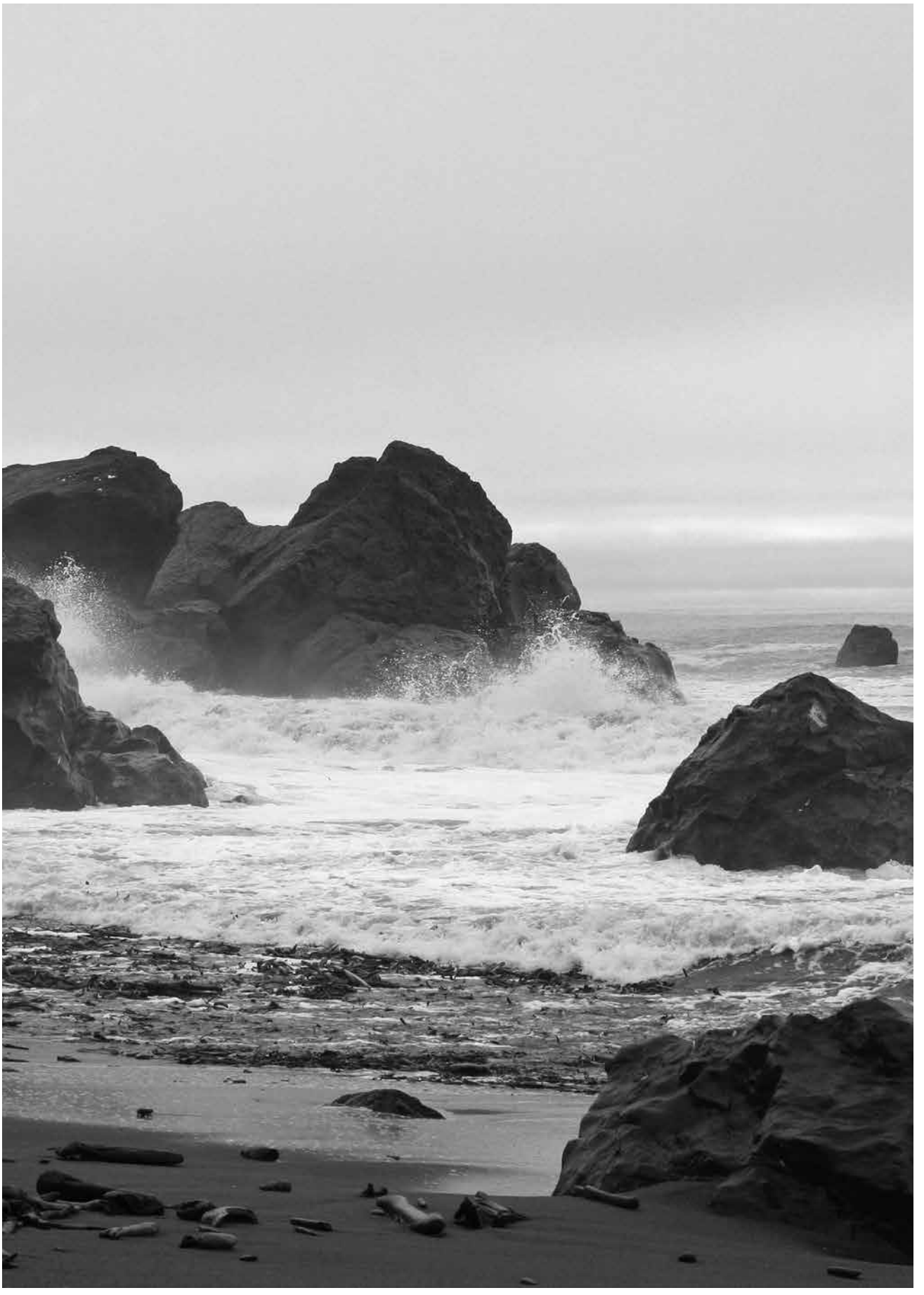
While being politically active is necessary, we should be careful not to internalize and glorify notions of over-productivity and constant output that are promoted and learnt through capitalist models.

I lost touch of myself for a while and was forced to remove myself from my busy schedule before I lost touch with reality all together. I left the city for four months to recuperate and seek support, healing and counselling. When I came back in the fall, I let go of certain involvements in an attempt to strive towards a more sustainable pace for myself. Despite my intentions and increased self-awareness, I took on a demanding job contract, and continued to be involved in activism past my capacity for the year following my hiatus. I couldn't seem to shake the fast-paced Montreal lifestyle. I wasn't able to figure out how to actually slow down there, be less involved and feel okay about it. The constant slew of radical events, demos, marches, vigils, panels discussions, film screenings, workshops, conferences, convergences, etc. made that city a very exciting place to learn about radical politics, but also a very anxiety provoking place for me. There is a feeling of urgency in the political culture of that place that normalizes hyper productivity, which can be very inspiring and motivating, but was ultimately too much for me.

Eventually, I realized I needed to leave the city for good. Many other factors impacted this decision, but constant over-stimulation and the fast pace were central motivators. It was very difficult to admit to myself it was in my best interest to leave because I had come to feel a strong sense of political community there, which took years to build. However, I knew if I stayed my mental health would continue to deteriorate and be placed on the back burner. With an awareness of the fact that my emotional issues follow me and won't just disappear when you leave a place, I am now focusing my attention to working through my relationship with anxiety, and to notions of productivity.

I'm currently spending the winter in a small rural community, living a fairly isolated existence. I am not doing any political organizing at the moment, not socializing on a regular basis and am instead working on emotional, mental, and creative sides of myself. I consider this time to be one of recovery from burnout. A time to prioritize being good to myself and of learning how to expect less of myself sometimes. I don't feel bad about taking this time and disconnecting for a while. Since admitting burnout, and making the necessary changes in my life to recuperate, I'm thinking a lot about sustainability and reassessing what is within my capacity if I want to continue being involved in political organizing for the rest of my life. I see a lot of activists and radical types around me feeling down on themselves, self-conscious, guilty, invaluable, in times where they don't feel up to taking much on.

I've judged friends who I considered not to be very politically engaged or active, thinking myself more radical than them because I felt that what I was doing mattered and was helping to address some of the messed up forms of injustice I see around me. I now think passing such judgement on a comrade based on their political involvement is bullshit. Everyone has their own gifts, their own capacities, and approaches to activism. Not everyone is in a mental, or emotional space to be able to take on activist organizing. As anarchists, and radical types, I think it's important to stop placing so much gratification on being hyper-productive and involved. While being politically active is important and necessary, we should be careful not to internalize and glorify notions of over-productivity and constant output that are promoted and learnt through capitalist models. It's okay to take space, be vulnerable, slow down or approach activism from less exhausting entry points. Whenever someone is taking the time to slow down, pull back, take care, someone else has the energy to put in and step forward to fill more demanding roles. If we want our movements, and our own relationships to activism to be lifelong and sustainable, we need to accept and recognize where we're at and not be so hard on ourselves for "not doing enough". Most of the movements we are part of will be ongoing for a very long time, so self-awareness, rest, balance and sustainability are key. These movements should be spaces of caring, understanding, and loving, not anxiety and burnout. If we're in it for the long haul, we need to be gentle and accepting of ourselves as much as we need to continue upping the ante. Δ



Leaving: An Interview With Andréa Schmidt

Andréa Schmidt discusses her transition from activism and organizing to working as a journalist and filmmaker. by the Peak

How has your contribution to political struggle changed over the years? Can you talk about why that is?

In my twenties, I spent a number of years actively organizing for social change – anti-gentrification work, migrant justice work, anti-war and anti-imperialist activism, and solidarity work with movements around the world. I effectively stopped doing that work when I became a professional journalist – and by professional, I mean both that I started getting paid to do journalistic work, and that I became bound by the codes of ethics of the profession (which can be interpreted in a range of ways) and of the various news organizations for which I have worked (which are more clearly defined).

I decided to become a journalist in large part because I had a number of experiences that led me to burnout, and to intense dissatisfaction with slogans. I think the burnout and the sense of hitting an intellectual dead-end were related. Slogans, statements of principles, and demands, while integral to any campaign, didn't seem adequate for evaluating movement successes and failures, never mind for analyzing and interpreting the mess in the world around me. I remember feeling exhausted and alienated at a demonstration when I was about 27 years old – there were internecine quarrels about strategy dividing the scene I was part of that hadn't healed, and weren't going to. And someone, an older person, referred to me in conversation that day as "having responsibilities as an elder in the movement." And I thought, oh my god, this is crazy. I'm 27 years old. I don't know anything about how this is supposed to work. I desperately need more skills, experience, and political tools and I crave older mentors who could advise me about all those things, and about how collectively we could get out of this rut we're in. But there's no one around that I have that relationship with, and suddenly I'm being told I'm an elder in the movement? I wanted to cry. I wanted out.

The one person in my life at the time who I respected politically and intellectually and who acted as an important and generous mentor to me was a journalist. So maybe it's not a huge surprise that I decided that journalism would be what I'd do for the next period of my life. On the one hand, I thought journalism (unlike writing press releases) would allow me to ask questions that would lead to murky but very interesting and instructive political territory beyond what I'd held to be ideologically true. And its practice would also allow me to hone a critical practice, and a more dispassionate vantage point from which to learn about social movements across the political spectrum and around the world.

I hoped that that would, after many years, allow me to understand more clearly how social change actually works (and why so often it doesn't).

So that's what I do now. I make current affairs documentaries, mostly, about a whole range of issues, in lots of different places. (I've had the opportunity to make news docs about topics as diverse as the war for drugs in Mexico, the failures of the international community after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the ways in which US anti-terrorism policy contributed to the impact of the famine in Somalia, the ways in which inequality and a financial crash in the US gave rise to the Tea Party, and life after Guantanamo for former detainees in Yemen). If I had to describe the kind of journalism I do in a nutshell, I'd say that I focus on the policies and practices that make some lives worth less than others – and the movements that rise to counter them. The documentaries tend to be more analytical than most things on television, and also to amplify voices less often given a media platform. I hope they're useful to people who are organizing. But it's not the same as organizing – that's no longer what I do.

Have your politics and your approaches to social movements changed as you've gotten older?

I don't think that my fundamental politics and values have changed. And I do think that those political convictions tend to motivate the first questions I ask when observing an event and trying to figure out how to explain what's going on. (I believe this to be true of all journalists, no matter their political background. I think our most deep-seated convictions frame the questions we are most likely to ask first.) But I do think that the practice of journalism has demanded that I learn to ask a wider range of questions, and look at things from as many perspectives as possible. It's made me solicit and forced me to try to accurately interpret points of view that deeply unintuitive to me, and sometimes very uncomfortable, in the interest in telling the truth. Inevitably, this has made me less sure of certain things I might have accepted as truths or self-evident before. And I think it's given me a more textured and multi-dimensional view of how governance and statecraft function (or fail). Maybe it's made me more open to considering a broad range of political expression, strategies, tactics as potentially useful in different contexts, and yet somehow more cynical about any given one as *the* way forward. Which doesn't really matter, since I'm observing and interpreting as a journalist, not driving things as a political operative, or making strategic or tactical decisions as a movement organizer, or choosing how to articulate those decisions in agitprop or press releases or speeches.

Also, I think that watching movements rise and fall over and over again makes you a bit of an agnostic about what works and what doesn't, why the cycles happen the way the they do, why so much creativity and effort can sometimes really cause a shift and other times remains subcultural. Also agnostic about basic definitions: what does "imperialism" mean in the 21st century? What does "grassroots" mean, say, in the context of the US? I don't have easy answers to these questions, which then impacts how I think about social change.

> I thought, oh my god, this is crazy. I'm 27 years old. I don't know anything about how this is supposed to work. I desperately need more skills, experience, and political tools and I crave older mentors who could advise me about all those things.

I think that when learning about and analyzing social movements as a journalist, I tend to take a broader view of things. Maybe it's the deferral of judgement – the space in which critical questioning thrives – or maybe it's having had the chance to observe, at least superficially, how things work in many different societies around the world, or maybe it's just that as you get older more and more of your peers start having children and spending time fulfilling the range of responsibilities that creates. Or

perhaps it's just self-justifying. But I find I'm much more prone to accepting that there are different phases of life that one devotes to different things, and that a healthy community needs to make space for people in all those different phases, and lasting movements need to acknowledge the different roles that people play and the different contributions they make in different periods of their lives.

How has your life changed? How does that affect how you interact with organizers and/or "the movement"?

Financially, I'm much more stable than I was when I was organizing almost full time, and honestly, that makes it a lot easier to feel mentally, physically and psychologically well. Worrying about being able to pay rent, feeding yourself — never mind dependents — and struggling to acquire and scrounge together the tools you need to work is tremendously draining. I could write a long treatise on capitalism and creativity.

I think I'm still as obsessed with politics as I've ever been, and as single-minded about whatever project I'm working on at a given moment. And I do love politics, which are at the heart of almost every story I tell. I don't have children, and not having them has been a very conscious decision, affording me more flexibility to take physical and financial risks, and be obsessive and single-minded about what I do. (That's just a personality trait though – I think it's useful, both as an organizer and as a producer. In both spheres it alienates some people, and attracts others. I'm ok with that.)

But as I mentioned above, working as a journalist has meant a separation from "the movement" – a critical separation, in the sense that I no longer contribute to it as an organizer, and to the extent that I cover "it" or parts of "it" I do so as an outsider asking the tough critical questions about strategy and accountability I would ask of any movement or group of people. But also a physical separation – I have lived in different cities since I stopped organizing, have developed close relationships with colleagues and people outside the movement that are as loyal and fraught as those I maintained with co-organizers for many years.

At times, there has been an intense loneliness to this separation, but also a relief. The movement, as I experienced it in my twenties, was very insular. When I left and started moving toward journalism, separating myself, I was terrified that I would no longer exist, that I would lose any identity I had at that point. And at the same time, one of the interesting things about growing older in this separation is that I've learned that some of the relationships that were forged "in the movement" are really amazingly enduring, and those loyalties have, over the years, transcended a range of political choices and weathered the separation. And that's a source of great joy and gratitude.

Working as a journalist has meant a separation from "the movement" – a critical separation, in the sense that I no longer contribute to it as an organizer, and to the extent that I cover "it" or parts of "it"

Do you work in a community of people your age? Or are they mostly younger?

Now I mostly work with people my age, and people 10 to 12 years younger. I really like working with younger people because they're energetic and enthusiastic about things that I'm getting jaded about. Sometimes that causes friction – but I think it's productive. Also, it makes you realize how stories and political themes/dynamics persist or recur and are 'rediscovered' by new generations of journalists – which is both frustrating if you've seen it before and think there's nothing new to learn by exploring the theme again, but also thank god, because actually we do learn new things by investigating stories that have been done before, exploring themes that have been discussed before. I think there are probably parallels there for people organizing in social movement settings.

And because I have a huge debt to the two or three people who have mentored me, I try to be a good mentor to younger journalists I get to work with. I think sometimes I fail – single-mindedness, exhaustion, competitiveness all being reasons – but I try. It's crucial. I think that relationship is likely different from what you get in horizontal social movements – for better or for worse, my relationships with younger people tend to be as their supervisor on projects where I'm the journalist with more experience and seniority in a hierarchical newsroom. I try to moderate that when I can, in light of my experience in more horizontal collectives.

I also really like working with younger people because they're still allowed to feel good about wanting to learn everything. By the time you're my age, you're supposed to have learned all your skills, and be in the process of perfecting them, building retirement savings on the basis of them. But there's still so much I want to learn – both technically, and more generally about how the world functions. So working with younger teams — or with people my age who are similarly still curious and want to learn

new stuff and experiment — feels more dynamic. And it keeps me from calcifying.

At the same time, it can be challenging. Sometimes when I'm working with new teams, and particularly new teams of younger journalists, I long for the shorthand I have with people I've worked with for years. That thing where you get new information, and you can figure out what you're going to do about it together with a look, or a few words. You don't need to talk through everything in detail. (I remember feeling this way about tight knit crews of activists I organized with too.) That level of shared experience can be a real strength in crisis situations, or on a tight deadline – it allows you to move fast. And it's a real solace when you're doing something difficult, scary or exhausting. At the same time, it can make you insular and lazy, and over time that becomes a weakness for both journalists and outward looking social movements.

Are there communities you've organized with in which people of all ages, and people with and without kids, manage to work together? How do they do it? Why do you think it's so hard for so many of us?

The activist scene I "grew up" in wasn't particularly intergenerational. There were certainly older activists involved in important ways, but they were the exception, and either they didn't have kids, or their kids were grown up. Some people had kids, but I think they often really struggled with how to think about their involvement when they could no longer attend meetings every night of the week and for large chunks of the weekend. Certainly when "the movement" was organizing with communities beyond itself (yes, even that diction raises a range of questions, doesn't it) things got a lot more intergenerational. There were kids, extended families, meals, contingencies. Things also seemed to get less polarized, ideologically speaking, less petty on a personal level. I think those contingencies force a certain level of pragmatism, for better or for worse.

Why do you think people drop out of activism/organizing?

I've briefly told my story of leaving activism/organizing to do something else. But people leave for lots of different reasons. Anecdotally speaking – and this is by no means supposed to be a comprehensive overview – here are a few.

I think that when organizations are heavily repressed, or when campaigns stagnate, or when movements are on the downswing after euphoric moments of convergence, victory or heightened hope (these things seem to go in cycles), activists and organizers tend to turn on each other. Instead of focusing on repressive state apparatuses, exploitative corporations, or systems designed to dispossess, and because they are worn out, they fight over petty things as though they were foundational issues, trade accusations of not being ideologically correct or sufficiently radical, and wage power struggles that are (relatively speaking) beside the point. I've heard organizers in certain circles referring to this recently as lateral violence, which is a helpful term. These are moments when I think people do exit "the movement" out of a sense of disillusionment and alienation. The disjunction between the rhetoric of social justice and the petty cruelty with which

> I find I'm much more prone to accepting that there are different phases of life that one devotes to different things, and that a healthy community needs to make space for people in all those different phases, and lasting movements need to acknowledge the different roles that people play

people can launch accusations in these moments can be hard to overcome when you're already exhausted (or facing charges, or worse). And that same disjunction can throw a range of movement hypocrisies, unaddressed oppressions, tacit discriminations, dishonest glorifications and other shortcomings into stark relief. When the people you thought were your friends turn on you, you start questioning everything they've told you.

Other people start to feel like they've outgrown the subcultures associated with certain organizing practices or activist scenes, and it becomes more onerous to remain involved when most of your peer group has moved on. This is most obviously the case with various forms of organizing rooted in student or campus activism.

And still other people end up "dropping out" because they have children, or because they get jobs that make it difficult (and occasionally impossible) to participate in the way they have in the past. Having small children is time-consuming and shifts most people's sense of responsibility – the risks you take, be they financial or legal, suddenly have significant implications for someone totally dependent on you. I get how that's a huge deal, even though I haven't had that experience myself. I also notice that different parents respond to that shifting set of pressures and responsibilities in different ways. Many new parents I know remain actively involved in social movements; not everyone disappears. But I do think that the new time constraints are significant. And I would guess that they impact new parents' ability to engage in the kinds of socializing that binds various organizing commitments and activities in many scenes – you're not going to go drinking after meetings three nights a week and be at every benefit show if you're responsible for a six month old. I imagine that this would alter one's sense of belonging to various activist scenes I can remember even if one were still able to attend meetings three nights a week.

In every generation, I would guess that as some people leave or become less involved, it poses new challenges for those wanting to remain present and engaged in the movement. I've talked about all the great things about working with younger people. But there can be difficult things about having the same debates over and over again with new sets of people, and a frustration that develops with mentoring and supporting people until they leave too, in what seems like an inexorable cycle. That can be depressing. Perhaps attrition is contagious.

But I want to stress that I don't think people necessarily "drop out of the struggle" forever when they decide to do different things. I do know people in their fifties and sixties who, after their kids are no longer totally dependent, or prompted by other events, return to activism and to organizing. Or they begin to be able to contribute the skills and experience they've developed in other phases and areas of their lives directly to more political work again. I guess I'm saying that what can look like "dropping out" at a certain point in a life can, from a different vantage point, turn out to look more like a departure required in order to return, or even one of many such separations.

Do you think it's important for our movements to be intergenerational? If yes, how do you think we should develop intergenerational struggle?

I can imagine very effective militant groups or activist cadres with specific tactical or even strategic purposes that are not intergenerational.But I can't imagine any lasting and successful social movement that isn't intergenerational. On some level, that's tautological. If a social movement lasts, people in it will get older, younger people will join or be born into it...

For that to happen, for a social movement to last, for people not to age out of a web of relationships and activities, or a scene, I think there has to be a clear recognition that people have different levels of involvement and ways of contributing at different stages of their lives. Also, a recognition that people can come and go to a certain extent.

I don't think it's just an issue of child care during meetings – I tend to think it's more about how you conceptualize what "the movement" actually is, what animates it, what nourishes it, how far it extends, and how rigid its boundaries need to be. △

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Keep Going: My Experience of Radical Parenting

A rad mama reflects on the challenges of raising a daughter in a patriarchal world. by Meme

I

My six year old daughter asks, "Why don't girls play baseball?" I tell her that there are some silly rules in sports about boys and girls playing separately. I tell her that a lot of people believe that all boys are different from all girls in the same ways. She laughs.

She laughs a lot when I tell her things that make no sense. Like her chuckles can shrug off thousands of years of patriarchy. Like the illusion is so easy to see through, that it's a joke that it keeps happening.

"But mama, everyone knows that some girls are better at some things and some boys are too. And that some in-betweens are better at some things too. Everyone knows, don't they?" And I sigh.

How do I tell her that not everyone knows? That most people will try to squeeze her into a box and tell her she is feeble? Tell her what strength looks like: vulnerability is weak and a hardened heart is strong. Tell her that if she develops her mind as her strongest muscle she will be called a bitch and if she develops her body she will be called ugly.

How do I tell her that her voice is not valued? That she will have to work so much harder for the same recognition? That her passion will be mistaken for hysteria and her love for weakness?

How do I explain that her body is a ticking time bomb because this society will not diffuse patriarchy in time to save its young girls from abuse? That once that bomb goes off she probably will be blamed for being in the way of the hand that threw it?

I don't know how to tell her that it's so much bigger than baseball, so deep I can't find the bottom, so ingrained that our very skin is forged from it.

In this moment, my mind spirals, freefalling into helplessness, wondering what I did bringing a child into this world of suffering.

A minute has passed and she's still waiting for the answer.

I take a deep breath. "Maybe one day everyone will know, but right now, sweetie, not everyone does."

"Well, that's easy," she says, "we just have to teach them."

Her innocence slays me, cuts my heart open and lays it out. I grieve to know that I will, inevitably, have to watch it turn to cynicism.

And I smile, because she needs to feel like she is snuggled in warm blankets of security so she can face this brutal world. Because now is the only childhood she will get and growing up too fast is a fate I want to deny her.

"Ya, babe," I say, "we just have to teach them."

As if it were so easy. As if dismantling patriarchy was an afternoon project for a single mama and her six year old daughter. As if teaching someone how to unlearn systemic oppression was as simple as baking a cake: following a recipe and watching it rise in the oven.

II

People ask me what keeps me inspired to continue radical parenting. I'm not sure it's about inspiration anymore. I just keep going. There doesn't seem to be another option.

Keep going, even though I burnt out years ago. Keep going, even though I feel isolated from community because I am a single mama. Even though loving fiercely and continually hurts like hell. Even though I don't know if there's even a future to walk with her towards. Even though I don't have all the answers and screw up all the time.

I just keep going. And fail. Over and over again: I fail. Try again and fail better, as Cornel West says.

And I am learning to be ok with failing all the time. Learning that imperfection is inherent in the process. I'm becoming really good friends with grief and grieve regularly for the poverty of our times. For what I cannot offer my daughter. For all the times when I couldn't offer the best because I too am a product of this fucked up world.

I am learning to love deeply. It strengthens my relationship to myself, my family, my community and this Earth. I am nourished and, by this love, I just keep going. One heartbroken foot follows the other. No more inspiration, just imperfect, fierce love. △

Stepping Back:
An Interview With Matt Soltys

by The Peak

How has your involvement in activism and organizing changed since you became a parent?

I have still been involved in some activism, but it hasn't been as much a priority as it was before I was a parent. After my partner and I conceived I made the conscious choice to step back from activism. I did this because I wanted to get the most out of the entire experience. I wanted time to attend to my own emotional process around becoming a father, and to have more time to educate myself about pregnancy and labour support, and to spend more time with my partner. And there were the logistical things I wanted to really be on top of – getting stable housing, making a home, being financially comfortable, etc. For me it was a great choice as for the first time in years I prioritized to such an extent personal reflection and nurturing my relationship with my partner.

Do you chalk this change up to differences in your own goals and priorities, or to an organizing culture that isn't accessible to parents, or just to the demands of parenting on your time and energy?

A bit of both. I have changed as a person, not 100% because I am a parent, but just where I am at in my life. I have made space for things in my life that I didn't make space for when I was a busy activist. Also, I have had to reflect a lot on what was appropriate for me to be involved in now that going to prison would severely impact those closest to me. The activism I have limited myself to has been educational workshops and publishing a book.

There are also things about the 20 and 30-something childless activist culture that are incongruent with the lives of parents and children. For example, many events happen in the evening, when parents need to be home putting their kids to bed and taking care of a host of chores. House shows/parties that facilitate networking and relationships are also after bedtime, so I've found it very easy to be out of the loop.

Do you think it's as important to give your child a good political upbringing, as it is to raise a child who is happy and healthy and feels loved and important? Are there tensions between these two things?

I have mixed feelings about giving a child a "good political upbringing." We're always instilling values in our children, mostly latently or unconsciously just by how we communicate and interact with our kids, and how we interact with and describe the world around them. I worry about crossing the line from exposure to indoctrination. Currently I think that it is most important to raise a child who can think critically for themselves, who is confident in questioning others around them, who knows who they are, and who is given freedom to live life as they choose (after a certain age). I feel that raising a child like this will inevitably allow them to live in a way that feels right for them.

For example, my son loves all types of vehicles, including police cars. For a little while when he was around two years old, he'd ask me if I like police. I'd tell him I don't, and try describing why. Then he started saying "No like police cars," or "Papa don't like police," when we'd see a police car. I was worried his daycare providers or various other adults would judge me for feeding him ideas that he couldn't understand as a two year old.

What would organizing have to look like for you to want / be able to be more involved? (eg. more focus on issues that are important to you? childcare? A structure that doesn't involve so many meetings? A different attitude towards children?)

I would love to be a part of a diverse intergenerational community where kids and families are central to organizing. A culture where relationships and community-building are valued, and kids are encouraged to participate in some way that is age-appropriate and fun. △


decay
growth
survival

Left Linocut by Peggy

Committing... for Better & for Worse:

An Interview With mandy hiscocks

by The Peak Collective

Mandy has lived in Guelph since 1994 when she started her undergrad at the university, where she started to get involved in political activism and organizing. After graduating she spent many years working on campus, and is currently the Volunteer Coordinator at OPIRG-Guelph, a social and environmental activist centre at the university. She has been part of many different actions and campaigns, many of which have landed her in court, some of which have landed her in the hospital, and one of which landed her in jail. They have also been her main source of purpose, accomplishment and friendships over the last 15 years. mandy turns 40 years old in a few months. Since the 90s she has watched most people she worked with grow up, burn out, or fade away, which gives her all the more respect for those who have stuck around.

How have your politics and your approaches to organizing changed as you've gotten older?

I used to be really dogmatic. At first I was dead set on non-violent civil disobedience and I wouldn't hear from anyone who argued otherwise. And then during the anti-globalization movement, when I had my first real run-ins with scary riot cops, I realized that that wouldn't work, that we'd be slaughtered. So I became really dogmatic about militancy and economic damage and direct action. Now I believe in a diversity of tactics, and that we need to be flexible. I'm a lot more willing to work with a wider range of people and organizations,I'm a lot more interested in what they have to say. Part of that is that I'm less idealistic than I was. I used to think that with enough information people would care, and once they cared they would obviously fight. Now I know there will always be fewer of us than we need, that most people won't step up, and so we have to be more strategic in using the little we've got and we can't be discounting the people whose politics aren't exactly the same as ours.

What are some obstacles you encounter when you work with people of an younger generation? How do they treat you? What are some of the tensions?

I sometimes distrust younger people in the sense that I don't know if they'll be around five years from now. You know that old 60s hippie saying "Don't trust anyone over thirty"? Well sometimes I think it's more like "Don't trust anyone under thirty." So many people see activism as a phase, or a hobby, and then go on to get fancy jobs, a house and a car, and have families and all that. It's disappointing, every time. It's hard for me to commit to people if I don't know that they're committed as well. I do acknowledge that that's harsh, that people's early twenties are a time when they're figuring things out and experimenting and so on. There's nothing wrong with that. It's just that after ten years of it it takes its toll.

This is definitely not to diss anyone in my community, regardless of their age. People are amazing organizers, and have stood in solidarity with me through a lot lately. It's just that in the back of my head there's always this nagging feeling that they could be gone any day.

There's also this nagging feeling that people are setting themselves up more than I ever did, when I assumed none of us really did that. I didn't think people were saving money, or thinking of a career, or considering buying houses, or any of that. But more and more I see people are doing those things and it terrifies me, because I feel like I didn't get the memo, you know, that even though we're radicals, and some of us are anarchists, we should still be looking out for number one. One concrete thing that I miss is working with other cities, which was a much more common model during the anti-globalization movement. It has fallen out of favour, and it's kind of looked down on by the younger crowd. Things are more insular now, we tend to organize inwards more than outwards and I don't think it's as effective. It's

just one of the ways that things change as we get older - the things we worked so hard at and put so much energy into are cast aside. That can be hard at times.

I should say that I'm very grateful and honoured to still be accepted by a group of people ten to fifteen years younger than me. If I wasn't, I wouldn't be able to do the kind of organizing that interests me in this town, and then I'd be the one having to make the choice of "Do I stay and do less than I could, or do I leave for a place that has older radicals in it?" I know people my age in many cities, I could go to any of them and be accepted there, but I don't want to leave Guelph. I made a commitment to Guelph a long time ago. So I'm glad I can still work with people here.

My life in Guelph has been marked by saying goodbye to a succession of amazing organizers. It takes its toll on a community.

Why do you think it's so hard for so many of us to organize outside of our peer group?

I should start by saying that everything I talk about from here on in will be based in my experience of organizing in communities of mostly white, student and/or middle-ish class people, usually between the ages of twenty and thirty. That is what I know, and that's what I'm talking about. I can't speak about other communities, and nothing I say in this interview is meant to include them.

Part of the problem is that people aren't rooted in a geographical community. People move around, people really value freedom of movement. It's a good thing in a lot of ways but it means that we didn't grow up around our neighbours, we don't have family ties in the community, we have little history with or commitment to the people around us, and there's no long-term attachment to the land base. So we tend to gravitate towards people who are like us, who enjoy the same things and have the same politics, who use similar tactics. It's easier. It's also more fun— I mean, if you're going to organize in your spare time you're giving up opportunities to hang out with friends. So if you organize with your friends, you're feeding two birds with one hand so to speak. The downside of combining organizing with friends with the ability to move easily is that people's personal shit, their arguments with and disappointments in each other, can often mean that they just walk away. They stay in town but leave the movement or stay in the movement and leave town. There's no real impetus to do the hard work of staying where we are, sorting out our differences, and carrying on.

Even when there's no conflict, people often get bored or don't feel challenged and so they move to find a better organizing scene, one that's more exciting or appears to have more potential. I can't count the number of people who've picked up and moved to Toronto or Montréal because it's cooler, there are more people to work with, people are more radical or more experienced or whatever. My life in Guelph has been marked by saying goodbye to a succession of amazing organizers. It takes its toll on a community.

I'm certainly not saying that moving is always a bad thing. Sometimes a move is what allows someone to start organizing, because it's a move to a community of people they can identify with. A lot of my frustration with it stems from my privilege of not having to move in order to find a group of people I'm comfortable with. Moving from straight white rural Ontario to Toronto, for example, probably opens up a whole world of political organizing to a lot of queer people, or people of colour. But still, that's a community based on common identity, which is a different beast than a community rooted in a place. Sometimes I let myself imagine if all the amazing organizers from Guelph who are now doing great work in cities around the world had stayed here. We needed those people to have stayed here. We reinvent the wheel all the time in this town because there are so few people who remember the organizing of the 90s, let alone anything that happened before then.

Why do you think people leave the movement?

There are all kinds of reasons people move away from organizing. Burnout and too many defeats are a couple of reasons. But I wonder about those sometimes. Most movements are far more repressed than ours, and the consequences of resisting are so much harsher for other people than for us. As for defeats, it's always been that way. Change has always come at a huge cost, people have had to pick themselves up time and time again before winning anything. I think we really do need to suck it up a bit. It's not a popular opinion in this day and age of self-care, and I get a lot of flak for it, but there you go.

Careers and jobs are a huge reason people leave. Lots of people are in school right now to be lawyers, nurses, social workers; a few years ago it was teacher's college. Organizers who pursue these careers often continue to be part of the movement There are lawyers who take on political cases pro bono— the Movement Defence Committee is a group of movement lawyers who do workshops and

legal support for activists. But a lawyer, obviously, has far less time to contribute to actual organizing. And they are constrained to a certain extent by professional codes of conduct. I have friends who are lawyers, and can see how torn some of them are between their career and the organizing work they used to be part of. It's not easy. I have so much respect for the few of them who don't get pulled all the way out of the movement and into regular lawyerland. I think that often people go into a certain profession thinking it's the best way to make change while actually supporting themselves, and then learn the limitations when it's too late. This is a common complaint of my teacher friends— that there they are, with a bunch of youth who are at the age where their political opinions are forming, but the curriculum is so packed and the classes so big that there's no time to really talk about things. I think a lot of people get a career with really good intentions of using it to support the movement, but end up realizing that it's not what they thought it would be.

Sometimes people don't leave so much as drift away without meaning to or even necessarily realizing it. I worry sometimes that this is happening to me. I was lucky to land myself a job that I could live with politically speaking, as well as live off of, financially speaking. It's hard to juggle having a good, mostly ethical job with continuing to organize outside of it, especially when your job is similar to the work you'd be doing for free (meetings, events, posters, campaigns, and so on). There was a time that I was (or at least tried to be) part of every single project and every campaign going. I barely slept. And then a few years ago I realized that I actually did very little organizing outside of work and that I'd hardly even noticed the shift. Suddenly all of the energy I used to put into unpaid work was going to my job.

> Most movements are far more repressed than ours, and the consequences of resisting are so much harsher for other people than for us.

Kids are another big reason people drop out, or are forced out of the movement. I'm not a fan of radicals having kids— for one thing, they can be used against us. A threat to someone's child is a pretty common way to get them to snitch, for example. I also don't buy the "breeding the revolution" theory that's quite popular these days— the one that says that we have to have more children so there will be more good people / more fighters / more people who will resist. The fact is there is absolutely no way to know how a kid will turn out, especially because we place so much value on independence and people fulfilling their dreams and being whoever they want to be, and we constantly stress that we'll love our kids no matter their choices in life. Finally, in North American society it's almost certain that any person does more harm than good to the planet and to people in the global south, no matter how amazing their politics are or how well they put them into action. It's just the way we live, the way we're forced to live. I can't remember who said it, but I once heard the expression "At the end of your life, make sure you've done more good than harm." If we really take everything into account, very few of us are doing that, and very few of our kids will either.

Don't get me wrong, I love kids. I have nieces and nephews, and lots of friends' kids in my life. It feels like such a sacrifice to never have had any of my own to care for. But we make a lot of sacrifices for the movement, and this is just one of them. People need to decide, I think. We can't breed a revolution AND raise kids who feel that their parents will support anything they do. We can't really resist, we can't put our shit on the line, AND still live up to the standard of parenthood that has been set for us.

Still, people will continue to have kids, and so it's up to all of us to figure out ways to make sure they're still included if they want to be. As a movement, we're not good at that. Our meetings are at bad times, they're not fun for kids, we don't include the kids in our decision-making and we don't usually talk about issues that are important to them or their parents. This is also true for youth, and elderly people, and people affected by (dis)abilism. Our organizing is centred on and structured around the interests, availability and capacity of a very small slice of the population.

Why do we even want these things that tear us away from the struggle? The career, the house, the kids?

The sad fact is that we are far more mainstream than we like to believe. We like to think we're counter-culture or have a better system or whatever, but when it comes down to it we often end up doing what everyone else does: we couple up, we want kids, having those kids tends to lead us to a single family home with a lot of stuff, even without kids many of us choose to buy cars and homes, and we want a good job that will allow us to be comfortable. These are the same things that most people want, be they liberal or conservative or apolitical. The personal property and nuclear family-based system really does suck us in, much as we like to say we're different. It's a powerful beast, and we've been indoctrinated into it from childhood. There are are a few people I know who resist this. They're in their 40s. They have jobs but they keep organizing.

They have kids but they still take risks. They live in collective houses with those kids. They are a great example of how we could live - but I know from conversations I've had with them that it's really hard. Society has been designed to push people into a very specific way of life and to punish those of us who want to do something else.

How do you think we should be going about developing an intergenerational struggle?

The tension between continuing to be part of the movement or dropping out often has to do with personal security. A lot of us have more to lose by being involved than by not being involved. One thing I think about a lot lately is the fact that I have no money saved for if I live beyond the time in my life when I'm able to work. I don't own a house. I don't want to participate in capitalism, I don't want to invest money and make it grow (read: steal from others or wreck the planet). But who's going to take care of me? I chose the movement, I chose to live by my principles, I chose to organize and stand in solidarity with the Earth and the people my peers and my lifestyle are screwing over. I wouldn't change that for anything. But it's come at a pretty significant personal loss– and I'm one of the lucky ones! I have good health and a decent job that keeps me fed, clothed and housed. The fact is that I'm fighting to topple capitalism, but until it falls it has a huge hold on my ability to survive, and while I benefit from the movement in a lot of ways personal security and a rosy future are definitely not among them.

Society has been designed to push people into a very specific way of life and to punish those of us who want to do something else.

The way that a lot of people drop out of the movement when they start to have more to lose speaks to our privilege. In a lot of communities it's very different– the struggle is a matter of survival, because so much has been lost already. Recently I was at a talk by a couple of people from the Mi'kmaq Warrior Society. They spoke of inspiration, of carrying on, of never giving up... whereas we speak so often of burnout and self-care and ways to keep the movement sustainable. One of the speakers talked about his kids. "I'm doing this for them. I don't want them to have to go through what I went through." He had been to jail, he had faced live ammunition from the RCMP. And now he's away from home on a months long speaking tour. Similarly on an recent episode of Democracy Now! a woman from Bahrain was being interviewed. She had faced harsh consequences for protesting the government there, and her young daughter would wake up at night worried that she would be taken to jail. She said the same thing: "I'm doing this for her." A lot of people in the very white, very privileged community I organize in might say this is irresponsible, that once you have kids you can't go around doing that stuff any more. But in my opinion, it's precisely those of us that have the privilege choose to walk away from the struggle that have the responsibility not to.

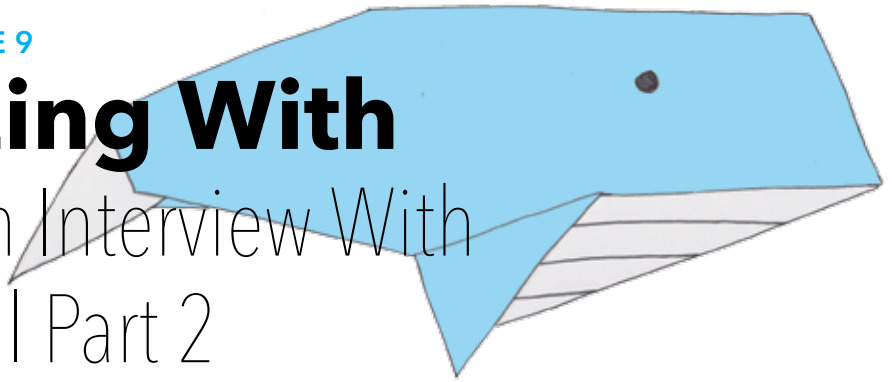
At the same time, it's hard to ask people to give up their health, their security, the well-being of their loved ones, for a struggle that is full of so much failure and disappointment. It's also hard to ask them to not put their families first. I'm reading a book right now of interviews with the children of republican and loyalist fighters in Northern Ireland[1]. Those people who died or spent a lot of time in jail probably thought they were doing it all for their kids too... but so far in the book very few of those kids recognize or appreciate that. Overwhelmingly, they are angry and bitter that their parent cared more for the struggle than for them. They talk about the poverty and the pain their mothers and family were thrown into, and how hard it was growing up the child of someone who wasn't around. And they certainly have very little sympathy for the struggle—in fact in most cases there's outright hostility towards it.

If we had a more collective way of raising kids, the impact of a parent who's often out at meetings or who ends up serving some time would be less severe and maybe kids wouldn't reject the movement because of how it hurt them. If we had a system in place to take care of people who can't find work because they refuse to sell out their principles, people wouldn't constantly be moving to Toronto to find paid work they can justify doing. We should have a way to ensure that our sick or elderly will be taken care of when they can't care for themselves - that we won't forget them, in the same way we don't forget our folks in jail. If we had this kind of mutual aid in place, then maybe people would feel less afraid of giving all of their time, resources and energy to something beyond their own personal lives. And we could have a real movement, one that people could have kids and grow old in, one in which people don't have to default to the mainstream life of savings and mortgages and career paths... because what we would have instead would be so much better than all that. Δ

1 Children of the Revolution. Bill Rolston, 2011. Guildhall Press, Derry.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Organizing With Youth: An Interview With Dylan Powell Part 2



by The Peak

In the second part of the interview with Dylan Powell, he discusses getting older, the value of older activists acting as mentors and creating intergenerational movements.

How have your politics and your approaches to organizing changed as you've gotten older?

As I've gotten older I don't approach advocacy in the same way. I try to set things out on a year-to-year basis if not longer. I try to put a lot of thought into something before I do it. I bounce it if off a lot of different people, I involve as many people as I can who I think are solid and who organize in the same way. At the same time I intentionally create that space for younger people, or people new to activist communities, to come in and to feel empowered and to make mistakes.

Getting older, and going through a couple of years of civil litigation now, has also forced me to really sit back and think about the things that are really important. It's really easy to talk about your politics, to perform your politics — it's a lot harder to live them. And it's a lot harder to swallow the pill of just how little we win, and the limitations that are upon all of us.

The older animal and earth liberation folks who helped to mentor me made it pretty clear a long time ago that using the tactics and strategies that I feel (and that they proved) are effective is going to have consequences. You shouldn't walk into a situation naïve, thinking that the state or the law or the police are going to protect you.

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I think that people in the community that I organize in see me as someone who's willing to take on a lot of risk for something that will make sense. Unfortunately I've backed myself into a corner over the years, taking on more and more risks because of that. I've always had a big problem with trying to implement strategies that collectivize risk and spread that out amongst the community while still getting people involved. It's always created a really big problem with consensus based decision-making models, because in situations where you have a lot of risk, if you're using consensus models generally the risk is not shared equally. People who are taking on an extreme amount of risk are basically in the hands of the people who are not taking on any risk or are taking on very little. So in terms of creating intergenerational communities, it's important to be creating organizational structures that can take into account the different risks that people are taking. That's something that I've never been able to wrap my head around but ignoring this dynamic is another thing that creates a lot of burnout in communities.

Why is intergenerational struggle important?

I got involved in animal advocacy here in St. Catharines, which has a really weird and isolated activist community. Most people leave, there is almost zero intergenerational social justice advocacy.

But at the same time there was a long-established animal advocacy community and a group called Niagara Action for Animals that had been

around since 1989. Some of the people who got involved there ended up getting professional jobs at the university and stuck around. People want to know what's the difference, why there's no seamless environmental or social justice community here. Basically, people in the animal advocacy community stayed. It's that simple. A couple of people managed to luck out and get good-paying living-wage jobs in the community, and they stuck it out. I was able to walk into a positive and welcoming community, I had people who were already there to help mentor me and bring me along. Not a lot of people have that same experience. I've watched in Southern Ontario a lot of people, even just over the span of six years, kind of reinvent the wheel because they don't have that.

I created a radio show called The Vegan Police, and I would interview a whole bunch of old-time activists in the animal and earth liberation movements. One of the first people I spoke to and was really inspired by was Josh Harper who was part of the SHAC 7, the Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty conspiracy case. Josh has been around since the mid-90s and he can look back and say "I was part of groups that would get 200 people out regularly to a demonstration, and I know of two of those people who are still active. Why?" He's able to trace the gaps between the different generations and some of the problems that led to such massive drop-offs and die-offs.

I was lucky in the sense that being involved in that radio show and Interviewing people like Josh opened me up to this broader world of mentors and people who really made this an issue outside of just the local community that I was part of.

Josh would always be really humorous about it, he'd always say "Most people either get careers, they go crazy, they go to jail, or they just kind of give up." I think there's a broad base of reasons why burnout is inevitable and why people leave. A lot of those reasons are really superficial and I think we shouldn't really take a lot of time and energy to invest in the fact that sometimes people are just selfish, sometimes people get involved based upon their own peer group and what they think is going to work for them at the time. And then a lot of other things are really substantive, like are we creating the ability for people to move through different identities in their life while still being a part of this community? A lot of times we type-cast people, push people into one specific one-dimensional kind of community and then if they want to break out from that or they want to do something different generally there's not the support for people to do that. If that's the case a lot of people just kind of drop off.

Are there communities you've worked with in which people of all ages, and people with and without kids, manage to work together? How do they do it? Why do you think it's so hard for so many of us?

One thing that I think really works is including social events. Not as a primary goal or a priority, but as something that can exist, so that people who can't be at blockade sites or can't be taking risks can still be involved. I can speak for the experience of the animal liberation community — in the 80s you didn't see this sharp distinction over tactics where people who were more traditionally liberally minded or wouldn't put themselves in certain situations, generally they weren't critical of people who did and generally they actually supported people who did. When you look at the situation today there's such a sharper distinction and I think that a lot of that has to do with the fact that in the 80s people had many more intentional strategies on creating those social spaces where those people could be together and those various communities could meet, and people could still respect that there was difference but that we were part of something together.

> One of the best things that ever happened to me was because I was able to enter into a community that already existed, and had the space to try, and to fail. We have to create space for young people to come in and fail, make mistakes. That's something that a lot of activists struggle with, especially in the larger cities like Toronto.

I organized a potluck series here in Niagara for a couple of years. There are endless critiques of potlucks which are really valuable, but at the same time there are a lot of people who go to those potlucks on a consistent basis who've supported some of the more radical or militant things that have happened in the community who wouldn't have had an outlet otherwise.

There are other communities outside of Niagara that are doing a lot more work around creating space for mothers, especially single mothers, to be supported in communities. I know in Hamilton recently they were doing a lot of fundraising for

single mothers in the community to get the things they need.

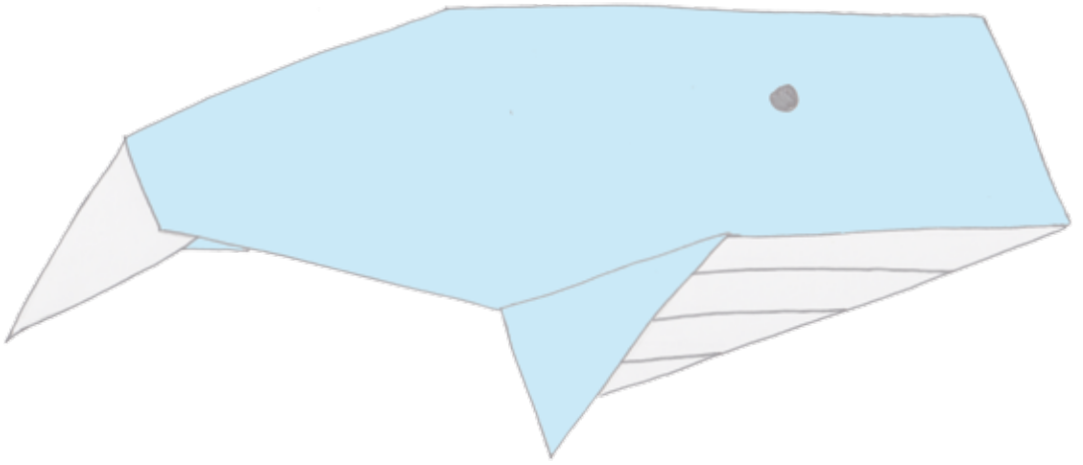
I think it's really hard for many of us because generally we create communities with people who are around the same age, who share a lot of things in common. I think this helps in a way because that allows us to take a lot more risks than we might otherwise and allows us to feel like we have a group or support base to take those risks. But on the flip side of that, it's important for me to remember that I'm in a different place than other people and other age groups are. Accepting that where you're at specifically is not *where everyone is* at is extremely important. Think of what you thought was relevant or important or what needed to happen four years ago, or if you haven't been involved in activist communities for that long, think about it six months ago. I can almost guarantee you that a lot of things have changed in your mind. You have to recognize that there's an issue of personal growth, and that the things that may be popular or comforting, or may draw you in and people who have common history or experiences to you, are not going to be relatable to everyone.

One of the best things that ever happened to me was because I was able to enter into a community that already existed, and had the space to try, and to fail. We have to create space for young people to come in and fail, make mistakes. That's something that a lot of activists struggle with, especially in the larger cities like Toronto. Generally people get really territorial and they don't want to see a lot of mistakes or failures, but at the same time, if you look at anyone who's been around for any number of years and they're doing things which are effective or successful it's probably because of a lot of failure and a lot of mistakes.

Any last words?

What's important is that the activist community not have a rosy idea that we just reach out to youth communities, and include them in campaigns, and thereby create these resistant communities of intergenerational struggle. We need to be aware that there are limitations to this work. It's not going to address a lot of the specific things affecting youth – for example, does the kid struggling with self-harm have support? Is there space for the kid whose dad's in jail ? That's really complex and broad, and there's so much more work to be done to even scratch the surface. A lot of people, when this conversation comes up, say "We need to be like the Black Panthers, we just have to serve community meals and do this and this and this." But the capacity and time and resources that went into creating those communities, and the repression that came as a result, should illustrate to people that that's a really rosy world view that isn't really our reality. Δ

What's important is that the activist community not have a rosy idea that we just reach out to youth communities, and include them in campaigns, and thereby create these resistant communities of intergenerational struggle. We need to be aware that there are limitations to this work.



A Day in the Life of Parents

The experience of parenting can look very different, depending on a person's class, race, gender and levels of support from family and community members. Regardless parents, you are doing great!

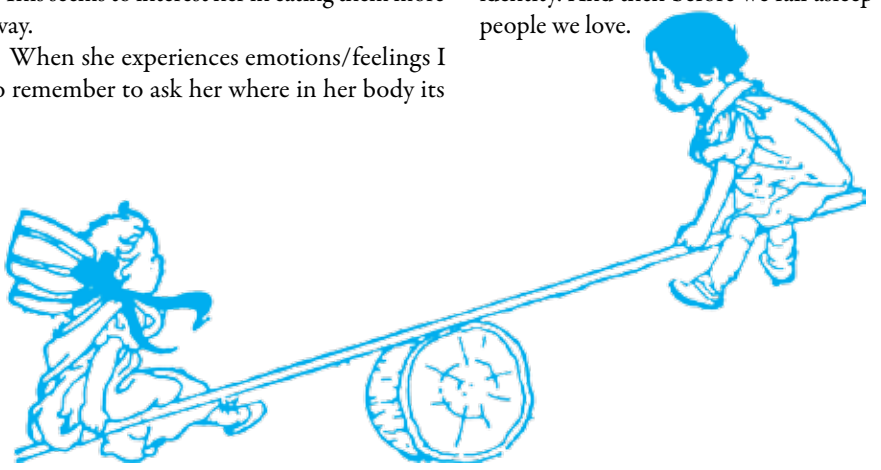
Compiled by The Peak

THESE ARE A FEW THINGS THAT MY DAUGHTER AND I TRY TO FIT INTO EACH DAY. GERTRUDE CALLAGHAN:

We like to dance, stretch, move our bodies in the morning. Try to celebrate the morning. During the day I try and foster critical thought, call attention to good instincts and get far out on creative story telling (each taking turns line for line). We've been talking lots about spirits too and that some folks can hear them if they listen. At the grocery store she gets to pick the vegetables to buy and she picks which to eat same at supper time. This seems to interest her in eating them more this way.

When she experiences emotions/feelings I try to remember to ask her where in her body its resonating. Hopefully then she can learn to both listen to her self/body and learn to move the energies out. We focus on the transient nature of pain.

Before we go to bed we cover what we did and what she liked about the day, what she didn't like in the day and what she hopes for tomorrow. I ask her what shes identifies as her strengths and then I make up a tale of the person named Isabel using those. Trying to foster a self made positive identity. And then before we fall asleep we list off people we love.



ANONYMOUS:

6:30AM "Mama, wake up. The sun is out." Wake up groggily and cuddle until 7:15.

7:15-8:15 Use every ounce of will to get ready for school and be out the door in time to get to school.

8:15-9:15/9:45 (depending on whether or not I have to take the bus): Drop the kid off at school and get home.

9:15/9:45-11:30/12:15 (depending on if I get a ride): Do as much emotional processing and/or self-care and/or work for money and/or creative expression and/or housework as possible, as this is the only uninterrupted time in my day. Alternately, space out on the internet and dissociate from everything 'cause life is hard sometimes.

11:30/12:15-12:45/1:30PM (depending on whether or not I have to take the bus): Pick kid up from school.

12:45/1:30-4:30 Eat lunch, play games, read books, and deal with tantrums while attempting to get housework and work for money done.

4:30-6:00 Make dinner, do dishes, eat dinner.

6:00-8:00 Bedtime routine a.k.a. be the calmest, most organized mama ever and make sure the routine is NOT broken.

8:00-10:00 Kid is asleep, if I'm lucky. Cry, if possible. Then maybe I'll make a phone call to a friend, maybe I'll clean a little, maybe I'll just space out on the internet while attempting to not worry about money, maybe I'll get caught up on any work-for-money contracts that I have, maybe I'll stare at the wall, exhausted.

10:00 My bedtime routine: skullcap tea and giving myself a foot rub, then curling up with a hot water bottle and my stuffy.

2:00AM Kid wakes up and needs me for something. Do my best to fall back to sleep easily

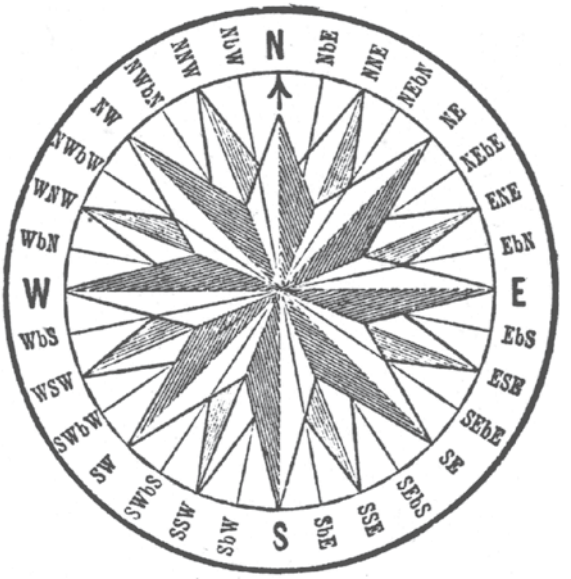
MIA:

5:30AM Babe crawls in bed & we fall back asleep.
7:15 Fourth alarm goes off, time to actually get up, make breakfast for babe and while they eat, I get other things ready for the day amidst constant questions about life, both from him and myself.
7:45 Getting dressed is full of cries and disappointments, babe wants their spiderman underwear, comfy wake-up pants with pockets and a dinosaur shirt, which are obviously all dirty from being requested every day.
8:15 Leave the house and walk to the bus stop, too icy to carry the babe, so they have to walk, which at least doubles the time it takes to get there and the amount of tantrums.
8:40 Get to the bus stop get on the bus, but from the amount of time everything took this morning, I will miss my class.
9:10 Drop babe off at daycare with hugs and kisses and promises of picking them up later that day.
9:20 Get some coffee before facing the rest of the world.
9:40 Catch a bus downtown and walk to the old place... clean up and search through the bajillion papers that exist in my life to find a single form that determines whether or not I will get a subsidy for child care.
11:30 Think briefly about the fact that I'm in school and should probably check what's going on with classes and assignments... but then decide it's more important to find the form that would save me over $800 a month and to clean my old apartment for showings.
1:30PM Head (by bus or walking) downtown for a coffee date.
3:30 Realize the time so I head back up to campus (bus or walking) to make some phone calls and answer emails... grab a granola bar for baby and check what's available at the food bank.
5:00 Walk to the daycare, pick babe up and catch the bus back downtown.
5:55 Get home and unpack from the day.
6:15 Start getting dinner ready, babe wants to play and starts inventing some kind of adventure that involves grabbing onto my leg like a monkey... too sketchy with cooking & hot stoves so I put on Curious George.
7:00 Dinner's ready, set the table, mild tantrum about stopping the movie and not wanting to eat.
7:30 Dishes and quick clean up of things.
7:40 Hang out, talk about things, cuddles and relaxing times.
8:10 Pajamas, teeth, potty and books.
8:30 Say goodnight, babe gets up a few times, asking for water, for the kitchen light to be on or to sleep in my bed.
9:00 No new noises from babe's room, so settle down and put on a show, check emails and course work, look at job ads for the summer but get super overwhelmed by near future life plans and decide it's best not to do that right before bed.
10:30 Decide it's a good time to go to bed, so turn off computer... think think think.
11:30PM Sleep is a hard thing to get even though I'm exhausted, so put on a boring movie... finally fall asleep.

PAPA P:

6:40AM Wake up with a groan.
6:50 Read books with my three year old and cuddle in bed, slowly wake up.
7:40 Make breakfast.
8:15 Let chickens out, give them food and water.
8:20 Read some more
8:35 Clean up lego and other toys.
8:50 Vacuum, let my son vacuum, cleaned up cat vomit.
9:15 Set him up for painting and painted with him for a bit.
9:30 Play music on the xylophone and piano.
9:45 Play trains.
10:20 Eat early lunch, put away dishes from last night, clean the table, organize clutter, read the paper.
10:50 Pull him in a sled to drop food off at a friend's house who just gave birth; they aren't home so we walk back. It is minus 18 celsius today, halfway back his fingers are hurting so I give him my gloves. Cold!
11:30 Read books about animals, play "I Spy".
11:50 Play trains.
12:15PM Make nettle and mint tea for both of us.
1:00 Put toques on squash and play silly games
1:20 Make more food.
1:50 Play lego.
2:20 Read some more books.
2:45 Partner come home, they play together, I write a few emails, do online banking.
3:00 I join them in lego and we talk.
3:45 We listen to a kids' album by Pete Seeger, stretch, dance, and play flying trapeze.
4:30 Give chickens new water and food.
4:35 Put away groceries, make and eat dinner, do dishes.
6:50 Read bedtime stories in his bed.
7:00 Fix side door.
7:30 Meditate, journal.
8:30 Talk about my partner's upcoming work schedule, make to-do lists, sweep, clean up living room.
10:00PM Go to sleep.





Changes

An organizer reflects on dropping out, dropping in, and staying to true their values. by Anonymous

It's coming on ten years that I've been participating in anarchist struggle against systems of domination. I find myself spending a lot of time reflecting on the past decade, which very often turns into thinking about the ten years ahead. As I think about where I want to go from here, I reflect on how different the questions I'm asking now are from the ones I asked as a teenager. How will I support myself and my projects financially into the future? How do my increasing number of criminal convictions affect my capacity for action? What kinds of projects do I want to participate in during the coming years? How do I stay engaged within an anarchist movement that typically sees few people stay involved into their thirties?

I'm calling it my late-twenties crisis, and a lot of my friends and comrades are experiencing it. There was a moment where it seemed everyone I knew had either quit school or had no intention of going, where we all supported ourselves with odd jobs, busking, scams, and welfare. Now a lot of those same people are applying to college or to masters programs, and I admit I'm thinking pretty seriously about resuming the degree I dropped out of when I was 20 years old. But I haven't managed to convince myself to move on it yet.

I have a desire for stability that I didn't feel five years ago. I feel critical that my first instinct in responding to this need for stability is to "drop back in" to a way of life that I'd previously tried to reject. Why does my desire for stability get immediately mixed up with talk of degrees and careers? My twenty-year-old self wasn't wrong when I concluded that an uncertain future was more desirable than the scripted life of mediocrity offered to me by success under capitalism.

Often, a decision to seek stability in this way is accompanied by a rejection of radical movements – the language of dropping out/in demonstrates this binary thinking. Either you're a radical and embrace the permanent instability that comes with that, or you've opted for a career and accepted an ideology that valorizes that choice. It's a legacy of the 70s hippy activism that radical politics is viewed as a phase, as something to be grown out of and looked back on condescendingly.

Rebellion tends to exist as a youth subculture – this both causes and is caused by folks stepping away from movements as they get older. Whether someone hits thirty and dedicates themselves to the stock market or embraces a life involved a new job in a social justice NGO, the effect is that more combative and passionate ways of engaging are left to the youth. As a younger radical, I often experienced frustration or confusion that there was no older generation to learn from (or at least none that I was in contact with) I want to offer two examples of ways that I felt this lack.

When I set out to learn about resistance, I was flooded with different ideologies by the so-called movement of movements of the early 2000s. In this flood, I encountered many positions that I would slowly and painfully come to realize were not related to the desires that motivated me to struggle, and were in fact often hostile to them. Why did it take me so long to realize that, for instance, conspiracy theorists aren't our comrades, that they are disempowering and have their roots in fascism? And why did it again take me more years to realize the same of neo-liberal micro-lending NGOs, the Québecois sovereigntists and other nationalist movements, and again for party communists? I've seen many people get bogged down in these dead ends and become disenchanted as they see their passions betrayed.

I also really felt the lack of elders around dealing with state repression. When I was 20 years old, I felt a very strong sense of urgency. Faced with the scale of destruction and suffering, it seemed that only violent direct action could meet the urgency of the situation. It is not my intention to argue for or against any particular tactics, but when I reflect on my 20 year old self fetishizing ELF arsons, I see the Cleveland 5 and the NATO 3, who are facing explosives charges after being set up by FBI sting operations. I see the two people from the 2008 RNC who got framed by Brandon Darby after he helped them make Molotov cocktails. I see Eric McDavid sitting in jail for decades after agreeing to participate in an undercover agent's plan to attack a dam. There was nothing about me that was smarter or more savvy than they were, I'm simply lucky not to have been targeted.

I don't want to make the tired old complaint that radicals are always making the same mistakes—I'm an anarchist, I want people to trust the authority of their own experience, not uncritically accept the words of someone who claims to know better. I want people to be able to learn and develop their analysis and practice in their own ways. But the depressing activist dead-ends and the violence of the police are just two of the many hazards that almost every young radical is going to encounter. If there were more experienced people around who I trusted and with whom I had political affinity, it could have made navigating them much less painful.

I want to honour my younger self's passion and urgency – it led me to quit school, avoid employment, and learn as much as I could about combative resistance. By following those passions I exposed myself to many experiences and ideas that I might never have encountered otherwise, and it forms the foundation from which I now decide my next step. I also don't want to be trapped by my past decisions, to transform the passions I felt into an ideology that reaches into the present to limit the scope of my current desires. One way I know to honour my younger self is to refuse to leave the anarchist space, to continue participating in struggle and hopefully one day be the wise older radical who I was so often looking for.

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To do this, I need to think honestly about my experiences of struggle, recognizing the few lessons I have learned, while mostly being humble about the massive questions that remain and the need to continue pursuing new ideas in the shifting social terrain. At this point, many of us have experienced infiltration, we've seen attempted entrapments first hand, we have drawn strong lines against statists and crypto-fascists, we have organized massive actions, we have maintained low-intensity conflict during quieter moments, we have cared for each other through hard times and inspired each other into the best times. We are only just beginning to not make "the same mistakes"— all the most exciting conflict is ahead of us.

This might seem remote from the big questions I asked at the beginning and from the more immediate question of going back to school. But if I anchor myself in a desire to continue resisting systems of domination, to participate in an intergenerational movement, and to continue exploring and learning, then the question of stability becomes a strategic one. Although I still feel a lot of urgency, I need to understand what I am actually capable of doing, and then strive to increase my capacity through struggle. When I attack power, I want it

to be a sustained engagement, a long-term commitment. I want to contribute to projects that are strongly rooted in their place and that are built from strong relationships. To do this, I am going to need stability— the permanent instability of the youth culture aspects of the anarchist movement will make it harder to move in the strategic direction I want to go.

I think of all the conversations I've had about not selling out or giving up, all the ways my friends and I have pledged to hold each other accountable. Of course none of us can see clearly enough to say for certain that a particular path is "selling out"— there aren't many people around who know what it means to consider a second decade of anarchist struggle. The old youth culture reference points that kept us out of schools and jobs through our twenties may not serve us as well into our thirties. This involves, then, a new recognition of our lack of elders, and a deeper appreciation for the handful of people who, in their late thirties and forties, are just as engaged as they were in their twenties.

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It's a big deal for me to recognize my desire for stability as being valid, but that doesn't necessarily give me any clarity about how to act. I do know that when I choose a course of action, I want it to flow from a genuine passion. Even if it looks like a college program or some shitty job, I want it to be clearly in reference to my own projects, not just because it seems like the only option.

As well, my current criminal charges are likely to leave me on some form of probation for a couple of years, and with my prior convictions, it feels nonstrategic to get arrested for breach. This might mean stepping back from some of the more confrontational aspects of struggle, which is of course exactly what the state wants. And they would love nothing more than if I stepped back from struggle and into a career.

However, if I redirect my energy into building infrastructure, networking, and educational events while I get through probation, then perhaps I can understand it as a strategic withdrawal to build strength, rather than a retreat. Similarly, if I approach the pursuit of financial stability in reference to these projects, I can smash the binary logic of dropping out/in. For instance, if I go to school to study languages and translation, it will create opportunities to build international relationships of solidarity and also to connect with non-english speakers locally. And when some of the projects that feel most important to me in the moment are social centres, publications, and prisoner support funds, having a reliable income becomes a part of a broader strategy.

Releasing some of the pressure of urgency has made it more possible to engage in these ways. My 20 year old self would have had a hard time with the prospect of stepping back for a couple of years, or with seeing financial stability within capitalism as an aspect of struggle. I don't want to reject urgency, or to see my past choices as errors— I was simply making different choices in a different moment, and choosing another path in the present is in no way a break with the values I held.

I still believe it is madness to wait, that my actions need to be ends in themselves, and that compromising with power is a good way to lose track of yourself. But now I also bring to this an appreciation of capacity building, a clearer sense of what my skills are, a stronger crew of people to collaborate with, and greater self-confidence and inner strength. I want to share experiences, keep learning, and engage in sustained struggle – if I centre these desires, then I can be confident in pursuing stability without retreating, dropping back in, or selling out. Δ



Spring News Briefs:
January 9th to March 17th, 2014

by Bryan Hill, Allison Parker & Peggy Karamazov

Photos March 15th Demonstration against police brutality **by David Rees**; March 12th Solidarity with Tyendinaga blockade in Toronto **by Nicky Young**

JANUARY 9

Vancouver, BC: Anarchists used an incendiary device to damage an HSBC bank in East Hastings. The action was claimed in solidarity with the 5E comrades arrested in México and indigenous land defenders in Elsipogtog.

JANUARY 13

St. Cloud, MN: CeCe Mcdonald, a trans woman of colour charged with second degree manslaughter was released from prison after spending 21 months behind bars. CeCe was arrested after defending herself and her friends from a transphobic attack outside of a bar June 5th, 2011.

JANUARY 14

Kamloops, BC: The Secwepemc Women's Warrior Society disrupted a meeting held between the government, chief and band council to discuss Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion.

JANUARY 17

Bloomington, IN: Several police cars parked outside of a police substation were damaged by anarchists with rocks. The action was claimed in solidarity with the 5E comrades in Mexico and the prisoner strike in Westville, Indiana.

Cayoose Creek, BC: Members of the Lillooet First Nations erected a blockade on Cayoose Creek, near the Fraser River where they say that construction of a water intake on land claimed by the Sekw'el'was has the potential to wipe out spawning beds used by coho, steelhead, chinook, pink, sockeye and bull trout.

Michoacan, México: Members of the Self Defence Group of Aguila have released their first public statement regarding their decision to self-organize a community guard to expel The Knights Templar cartel and other organized crime from their town. The cartel forces residents to pay "fees" under the threat of violence and death and used intimidation to secure a sympathetic shadow official in municipal elections.

JANUARY 20

Shediac, NB: Mi'kmaq Warriors Aaron Francis and Germain Jr. Breau continue to be denied access to their spiritual practices, like, smudging. While being held in the Southeast Regional Correctional Center since the RCMP raid of a Mi'kmaq blockade on October 17th.

JANUARY 21

Bloomington, IN: A yuppie business in the city's centre had its locks glued by anarchists. The action was taken against gentrification in the core of the city and in solidarity with the 5E comrades in México.

JANUARY 23

Nelson, BC: Members of the Sinixt First Nation and supporters are maintaining a low-key blockade on a Pass Creek logging road near Nelson. BC Timber Sales awarded a license to Porcupine Wood Products of Salmo to build 1.8 kilometers of road and harvest 15,250 square meters of timber in an area the Sinixt First Nation consider archaeologically sensitive and that has been contracted without consultation.

JANUARY 25

Otterburne, MB: A natural gas pipeline has exploded sending fire plumes hundreds of meters into the air, leaving more than 4000 people without power. The fires burned for more than 12 hours.

JANUARY 28

New York City, NY: Grand Jury resister Jerry Koch was released after eight months imprisonment for refusing to testify. The Grand Jury was convened to investigate the bombing of an army recruitment centre in Times Square.

FEBRUARY 3

Toronto, ON: Richard Morano pled guilty to six charges related to the riot during the G20 conference in 2010. His sentence includes seven months in prison, two years probation and $3000 in restitution.

Asubpeeschoseewagong Territory: Grassy Narrows First Nations are on alert for logging trucks after the Ontario MNR finalized a 10 year forest management plan in December 2013. Grassy Narrows is the home of the longest running First Nations blockade in Canada. More on this struggle on page 12.

FEBRUARY 5

Toronto, ON: A group calling itself Sports Without War created a spoof website proclaiming that the Toronto Maple Leafs annual Forces Appreciation Night would be honouring, "both Canadian soldiers AND the innocent civilians killed in the war [in Afghanistan]." The website went viral before being rebuked.



FEBRUARY 5

Wet'suwet'en Territory: Members of the Wet'suwet'en Unist'ot'en blockade camp have released a call for support as the approved Pacific Trails Pipeline has begun construction.

FEBRUARY 7

Southern Ontario: Enbridge's 57 year-old Line 7 pipeline has been approved to carry 40,000 more barrels a day. This brings its total capacity to 180,000 barrels a day. The National Energy Board approved this increase without any public hearings or consultation.

FEBRUARY 10

Oklahoma: Robert "Bobby" Charles Onco, a member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma and an American Indian Movement activist, passed into the spirit world after a long battle with lung cancer. He was 63 years old.

FEBRUARY 11

Seattle, WA: A Demonstration was held outside of the Méxican Consulate in solidarity with the 5E comrades arrested in México.
Toronto, ON: Avery Edison, a British transgender comedian, was detained at the Canadian border before she was transferred to Maplehurst Detention Centre, a men's prison. She was held for 24 hours.
Southern Ontario: The federal government is stepping up its battle against the Mohawk tobacco trade by spending 90 million dollars over the next 5 years, giving the RCMP new high tech surveillance tools along the Ontario/Québec border.

FEBRUARY 13

Paris, France: A revolt broke out in the Vincennes Immigration Detention Centre against the deportation of a detainee. Security cameras, doors, furniture and fire extinguishers were destroyed or thrown at the police. In 2008 during another revolt the whole facility was lit on fire and damaged.
Toronto, ON: Joel Bitar was sentenced to 20 months in prison for his role in the riots during the G20 meeting in 2010. Joel pled guilty to twelve counts of mischief over 5000 dollars. Kevin Chianella pled to 16 counts and received a 2 year sentence in a federal penitentiary.
Halifax, NS: Calls for a national inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women were renewed after Inuk student Loretta Saunders disappeared (her body was found a week later). Saunders was writing her thesis on murdered and missing indigenous women at the time of her death.

FEBRUARY 14

Paris, France: Anarchists lit fireworks in a solidarity demonstration outside of Vincennes Immigration Detention Centre following the previous night's revolt. Two comrades were arrested and held in prison for 10 days for their actions. A few days later. Anarchists broke the windows of three separate court houses in solidarity with the uprising.
Occupied Canada: Vigils were held for the estimated 824 missing and murdered indigenous women across "Canada." The annual Women's Memorial March started in 1991 in Vancouver's Downtown East Side after a woman was murdered on those streets.

FEBRUARY 17

México City: The 5E comrades — Amelie, Fallon and Carlos — were transferred from a detention centre where they had been held for 40 days without charge. Their terrorism charges were dismissed. They have been charged with "damage to property" and "damage to property in a group" stemming from a molotov attack on a Nissan dealership.

FEBRUARY 20

Seattle, WA: Anarchists vandalized a Bank of America with paint bombs in solidarity with Grand Jury resisters in exile or on the run. A Grand Jury investigation was called to investigate the 2012 May Day riot throughout downtown.
Montreal, QC: At least two police cruisers were damaged by molotov cocktails outside of the Ahunstic police station. A 26 year old man was detained.

FEBRUARY 24

Hamilton, ON: Sgt. Derek Mellor pled guilty to nine charges related to improper sexual contact with women. During the time that Mellor was leading Hamilton's "Project Rescue" anti-trafficking initiative, he engaged in sexual acts with five sex workers. Mellor was suspended with pay in December. His sentencing is set for April 24th.

FEBRUARY 26

Six Nations: The Two Row Times newspaper held a public meeting to discuss the impacts of the government's proposed Tackling Contraband Tobacco bill, which threatens to criminalize the First Nations' tobacco trade.

> "Since time immemorial, [tobacco trade] has strengthened our economy and has improved the quality of life for those on First Nations communities,"
> *-Jonathan Garlow, Community member.*

FEBRUARY 28

Tsilhqot'in Territory: An open-pit gold and copper mine has been rejected by the government due to the negative effects it would have on Fish Lake, sacred to the Tsilhqot'in nation. Taseko Mine Ltd. has been pushing for this mine for two decades.

MARCH 1

Seattle, WA: Anarchists vandalized a Department of Corrections office with paint bombs and graffiti in solidarity with resisters of the 2012 May Day Grand Jury.

MARCH 2

Crimea, Ukraine: Russia's military forces invaded the southern region of the Ukraine following the popular uprising which ousted president Viktor Yanukovych. International tensions rose as western nations characterized this as an act of war.

Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory: 70 Mohawks and supporters erected a blockade across Shannonville Rd. as the beginning of an escalating campaign of direct action to call for an international inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women and girls.

MARCH 6

Canada: Despite vigorous opposition from Indigenous communities and environmentalists, the National Energy Board has approved Enbridge's proposed Line 9 reversal and flow expansion. This 40 year-old pipeline has already caused 35 leaks, and crosses every major body of fresh water in Ontario. If completed, it would carry tar sands oil west to east for export.

MARCH 7

Otttawa, ON: Justice Minister Peter MacKay rejected calls for an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, claiming that arrests of individuals allegedly involved in the death of Loretta Saunders indicate that the justice system is working.

MARCH 8

Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory: Tyendinaga warriors and their supporters marked International Women's Day by blocking a CN rail crossing. Matthew Doreen and Shawn Brant of Tyendinaga, and Marc Baille of Kingston were arrested.

MARCH 12

Toronto, ON: In the middle of a snow storm indigenous rights activists used banners to blockade the CP railway for three hours calling for an inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women.

MARCH 15

Occupied Canada: On International Day Against Police Brutality, marches were held in Hamilton, Kitchener and Montreal. In Montreal, police declared the march illegal moments after it started, and participants were kettled, arrested and ticketed.

MARCH 16

Crimea, ???: The results of a referendum, which many allege was influenced by Russia, was 97% in favor of an independent state.

MARCH 17

Occupied Canada: A public consultation on sex work laws initiated by the federal government closed today. The five-question survey drew criticism from some decriminalization advocates, who called the questions as loaded and misleading. As one sex worker stated, "Our bodily autonomy is not a matter of public opinion."

MARCH 19

Haudenosaune Territory: Sacred fires were lit in Six Nations, Tyendinaga & Kahnewake calling for an inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women. In Tyendinaga, the CN rail line was blocked. △





Feliciano

Raúl Gatica is an Indigenous Ñuu Savi from Mexico and a community organizer living as a political refugee in Coast Salish Territories (Vancouver). This short story will be including in the upcoming collection Invisibles and Disposables. by Raúl Gatica

I met Feliciano on a farm in Montreal where he raised ducks, and when his sixth son was about to be born. He began by recounting how he started his life as a wage worker.

—I helped my father in the early autumn sugar cane harvest. I would grab the canes. A goddamned work. it makes you cry. One day I fainted. My father scolded me, because I embarrassed him: I, Feliciano all of a man of seven years had fainted.

I felt sympathy for Feliciano. Those that have suffered the same hardships and similar pains, we know of what he speaks. I stayed in silence to spare him the shame of continuing his story, but he was already on his way.

—Upset, my father left me in an ant-hill. He said that these savage ants would teach me to not be a quitter. My mom rescued me half-dead. I spent weeks in delirium with a fever.

Feliciano's story was a hard hit to my comfortable life, but I kept listening. He confided in me how hard it was to work like a beast. He never had anything and that is why he entered the 'program'*. The contractors talked about marvellous things. They said the greenhouses paid overtime or extra hours; that the houses where they would stay are luxurious; that in the Canadian fields, one almost picked dollars instead of pumpkins, broccoli, or lettuce. They said that the workers would return full of money.

Feliciano willingly described how the foreman selected them, tested their strength by making them run while carrying 50 kilogram bundles. No one was offended when they checked their health by examining their teeth like they do to horses.

—Selected, I sold my 11 chickens, 3 goats and my little musical donkey. I had to raise 5,000 Quetzales to guarantee my place.

He gritted his teeth and with sadness explained that his experiences unpainted the perfect world that had been drawn for him.

—They warned me not to make errors or insubordination's insubordinations? At the first strike I would lose the money; they would return me to my town and, in addition, because of my fault, no one from my community would enter the program.

With timidness, he tried to avoid answering the question of what it means to behave badly. Finally, he was honest.

—Joining the union, go to the support centre, complain about the boss, recount our problems to anyone other than the consulate.

Feliciano knew I was there to invite him to join the union. That day I didn't even try to show him the membership cards. Nevertheless, when we said our goodbyes I knew that he was fighting his battle.

—And now here life is shit. Even for what we don't have they charge us. And no, it is not true that dollars grow like pumpkin. This is the same as the times of the cane-harvest with my father.

I hugged him with the solidarity of an equal, and I left thinking about how to make this reality visible to Canadians- a reality so close to their eyes and so far from their hearts. Δ

*Temporary Foreign Worker Program



Feliciano

por Raúl Gatica

Conocí a Feliciano en una granja de Montreal donde se crían patos, y cuando estaba a punto de nacer su sexto hijo. Comenzó por contarme cómo inició su vida de asalariado.

—Ayudaba a mi papá en la zafra. Yo acarreaba la caña. Un trabajo de la puchica, te hace llorar. Un día me desmayé. Mi padre me regañó porque le hice pasar la gran vergüenza: yo, Feliciano, todo un hombre de siete años se había doblado.

Sentí simpatía por Feliciano, quienes hemos sufrido las mismas desgracias y similares dolores, sabemos de lo que hablaba. Me quedé en silencio para ahorrarle la pena de seguir contando, pero él ya estaba encarrerado.

—Encabronado, mi papá me dejó en un hormiguero. Dijo que esas hormigas bravas me enseñarían a no andar de rajón. Me rescató medio muerto mi mamá. Pasé semanas con calentura y desvariando.

La historia de Feliciano era golpe seco a mi vida cómoda pero seguí escuchándolo. Me confío que pese a trabajar como bestia, nunca había tenido nada y por eso entró al 'programa'.

—Los contratistas dijeron maravillas. Que los invernaderos pagaban horas extras. Que las casas serían de ricos. Que en los campos canadienses, casi casi se recogían dólares en lugar de calabazas, brócolis o lechugas. Que regresaríamos forrados de pisto.

Divertido dijo que para seleccionarlos les midieron sus fuerzas al correr cargando bultos de 50 kilos. Y que nadie se ofendió que checaran su salud revisándoles los dientes, como a los caballos.

—Ya escogido, vendí mis once gallinas, tres cabras y mi burrito Músico. Debía completar cinco mil quetzales como garantía.

Aprieta los dientes y con decepción explica que los tramites despintaban el mundo perfecto que le contaron.

—Me advirtieron de no cometer errores ni desobediencias. A la primera falla perdería la plata; me devolverían al pueblo y, además, por mi culpa, nadie de la comunidad entraría al programa.

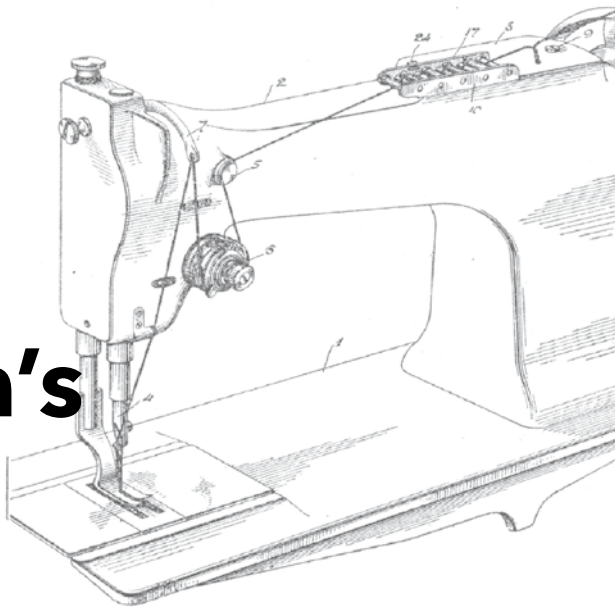
Con timidez intento evadir la respuesta a que significaba portarse mal. Finalmente se sincero.

—Juntarse con el Sindicato, ir al Centro de Apoyo, quejarse del patrón, contar nuestros problemas a gente distinta del Consulado.

Feliciano sabía que estaba ahí para invitarlo al sindicato, pero ese día ni siquiera intenté mostrarle las tarjetas. Sin embargo, al despedirnos supe que libraba su batalla.

—Y ahora aquí la vida es de la mierda. Hasta por lo que no tenemos nos cobran. Y no, no es cierto que los dólares nacen como calabazas. Esto es igual a los tiempos de la zafra con mi padre.

Le abracé con la solidaridad de un igual y me fuí pensando en cómo hacer visible esta realidad a los canadienses, tan cerca de sus ojos y lejos de su corazón. Δ



My Grandma's More Punk

by Richard Laviolette

My grandma has been making quilts for as long as I can remember. Usually she would make a quilt whenever one of her eight kids got married or when someone had a baby. My parents were given one of those quilts when they got married. I loved to wrap myself in this huge, beautiful wool quilt and feel the coarseness of the scratchy wool squares on the front in contrast to the coziness of the soft cotton back. In the summer, when it wasn't being used, it was stored at the foot of my parent's bed in this old wooden blanket box that dad had made. It was a quilt of many colours: bits and pieces of old coats and jackets left over from when her kids lived at home, from relatives long passed away, or thrift store finds. I remember being jealous of my parents for having both the warmest blanket in the house and the most beautiful. I loved the fact that it was made by my Grandma and that she made it with my folks in mind: a transfer of love, a token of her appreciation. A family heirloom. Not the kind that gets hung on a wall or kept in a cabinet except on special occasions, but one that gets used, tossed around, and broken in.

I took an interest in quilts about five years ago after my brother and I made a trip down to Port Colborne to see my Grandma and learn how to make canned tomato soup. It was a lot of fun. At the time I had been thinking about ways to be less reliant on capitalism. My Grandma was born just before the Second World War and grew up on a farm, so I knew she would have lots of insight into getting by without a lot of money. While thinking about other things I could learn from my Grandma, I remembered the wool quilt my parents had and thought about how many other quilts she must have made over the years. I decided to follow this excitement up with a phone call. We agreed I would come stay at her house for a week and we would make a quilt together.

Growing up, going to Grandma's was like returning to a place in a dream or a scene from a movie. It was warm and nostalgic. We only went there a few times a year so there was often a lot of anticipation leading up to a visit. Grandma has lived in the same century-old, two-story, red brick house since 1970. For my entire life, this has been her home: hardwood floors, high ceilings, wide wooden trim around the windows and doors, an upright piano, and a framed portrait of the Queen hanging in one of the livingrooms. I stayed in the 'sewing room', the same room I always sleep in. Some customs of going to Grandma's are playing songs on the upright piano, playing crib in the evenings, and wandering through the spooky attic. The attic is dirty and dusty. You can see exposed brick, insulation and rafters. There are parts of the floor that are unsafe to walk on. There used to be a body cast hanging from the ceiling as you entered. There was once an order to the attic where each of her eight children had sections and each section was labelled with their names written on a piece of cardboard taped to the ceiling with boxes of their belongings placed beneath. Now, things are picked through, and sprawled about. Still, there's an ordered chaos and lots of useful materials for making a quilt. After picking through a few bags and boxes, we were able to find enough old winter coats and tweed jackets to get started on the quilt. Over the course of the week, we slowly tore apart the coats and jackets, cut them into squares, and made them into a quilt. When it was done, Grandma had it dry-cleaned, saying it was cheaper to dry-clean it as a quilt than it would be to dry-clean each article of clothing you started out with.



Grandma has always made the same quilt essentially. The front is made up of 7 inch squares, often wool, sewn together like a grid (11 inches x 13 inches) with yarn ties at the corners of each square. I love this quilt. I love how square and simple it is, but how beautiful and interesting it looks when unsuspecting colours and patterns end up side-by-side. I love how the quilting frame she uses only costs 34 dollars for four pine 1x2's, four C-clamps, and a pack of thumb tacks. I also love that her quilts are durable and will last a long time. After twenty or thirty years, once the seams start to tear and the back starts to wear and the yarn ties have come loose, you can still replace the back with new material and redo the yarn ties. The work involved in making the quilt is rather tedious, but often you do it in the company of others. You can do it alone, but it's not as fun.

I have probably made six or seven quilts on my own since learning how to from my Grandma. My style has not strayed too much from hers. I have experimented with different materials and sizes. I have made quilts with a corduroy or cotton front so they don't suffocate you in the summer. I have made smallers quilts that I gave to friends as cat or dog mats. For a long time, I thought about the possibility of telling a story with quilts using the front as a storyboard. I knew this was certainly not a new concept, but I wanted to think of ways I could incorporate words or images in my own quilts to try tell a story. There are two quilts I have made with this intention, both for the Anti-Colonial Thanksgiving Dinner and both with my partner. For the first one, we silkscreened text and images onto four canvas squares that were sewn into the front of the quilt. They gave a brief colonial history of Guelph and the Indian Act. For the second quilt, my partner appliquéd four local herbs (motherwort, sumac, wild ginger and wild bergamot) onto squares that were sewn into the front. Both of these quilts turned out really nicely and I am excited to be more creative with my quilts in the future.

I took a moment to think about other important things I have picked up from my Grandma by osmosis. For one, she taught me how to be more patient and calm. I have never seen her yell at anyone or overreact. No matter who she is around, whether it's her children, her grandchildren or her pets, she does not throw her anger around. She is confident, stern, and firm, but does not try to hold power over people. If she disagrees with someone on an issue, she will give them her honest opinion, but then will give people space to make their own decision. Second, she taught me how to be frugal and hard working. She grew up with no material excess. I always hear her saying things like "waste not want not" and "a hundred pennies makes a dollar". She was really into making it yourself if you could, or slowly saving things up over time to have a useable amount down the road, like change, tinfoil, plastic bags, or fabric. She always had her own garden and canned all sorts of vegetables. She was always patching clothes and sending her kids to school with homemade bread sandwiches. (Mom told me they would try and trade their sandwiches with friends at school for white Wonderbread sandwiches.) I like how even though she is older now, Grandma still is still critical of what she consumes and considers its impacts on other people and the earth.

I love the idea of passing on traditions that are both practical and beautiful: something to pass the time, to bring people together and keep them warm.

Finally, she taught me that it's ok to be alone. Loved ones are important but you don't need them to feel complete or feel whole. I was five when her husband passed away. Grandma has lived on her own ever since in the same big old house, until recently when her son and grand-daughter moved in. I don't doubt that she battles loneliness, but she also seems content. She was married when she was 15 years old and raised eight kids. I think she came to appreciate the calm and quiet of an empty house. She gained an autonomy and independence that she had never had before, and it seemed to suit her quite well. She travels to see family, plays golf, reads, sings, goes to church, and makes a quilt every once in a while.

I love the idea of passing on traditions that are both practical and beautiful: something to pass the time, to bring people together and keep them warm. I like thinking about where I learned the things I know. I like sharing these things with my friends and look forward to curious minds down the road to whom I can pass these things onto and tell them all the ways they were shaped by my Grandma Pat. △

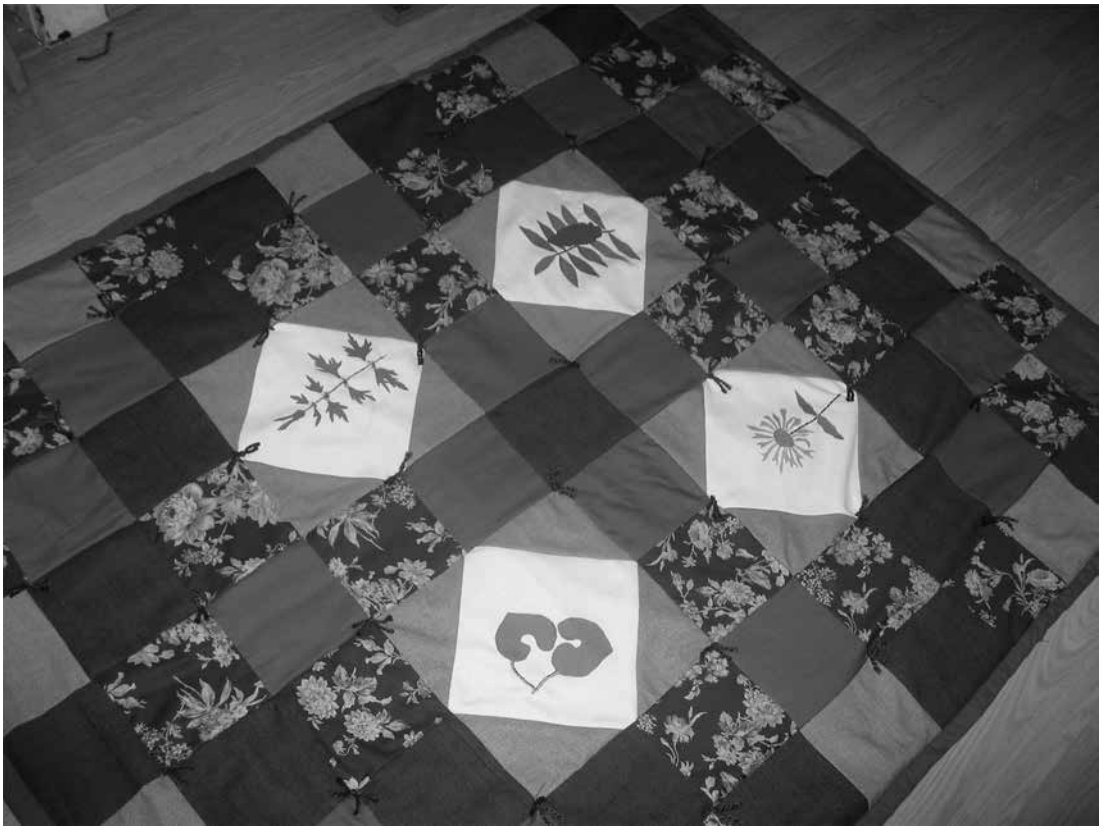
My Grandma's More Punk (Than You Know)

My grandma's more punk than most punks I know
You might not believe it by the look of her clothes
If you asked her directly, she'd politely say no
But my Grandma's more punk than you know

Money's never grown on the trees in her yard
She gets by with what she has, and she's had to work hard
She'd say waste not, want not, and cook your own food
If you keep your hands busy, you won't get the blues
When you're busy you don't get the blues

Old coats and jackets in brown garbage bags
Stored in the attic and out of the way
Ripped up and fed through the sewing machine
The quotas a quilt for each loved one in need
A quilt for each loved one in need

Many a time she's been almost knocked down
Fools and fast talkers try to push her around
She stands steady like the trunk of a tree
Her roots they are many, her roots they are deep
Her roots they are many and deep



Above The Anti-Colonial Thanksgiving Dinner Quilt, 2013

Why Are We Here to Die?

by Tom Dusome

you and i can bleed a little while together
talk about what we normalized in our cities and our towns
theres foam on the creek again upstream
puddles shimmer with oil and black clouds fill the air
and everyone's trying not to stare

(chorus)
why are we here to die?
when you had all of the fun
are we responsible for this?
are we responsible for that?
is this our home?
or are we just visiting?

my first instinct is to run away from all of this
hop a train to montreal or winnipeg
but once i look upon the face of the youth
I know all of this will just happen again
gotta be firm where I stand

(chorus)
why are we here to die?
when you had all of the fun
are we responsible for this?
are we responsible for that?
is this our home?
or are we just visiting?
i'll leave my garbage by the door

maybe i'll get dressed and redress our wounds
resent and refuse everything i'm told
cause each time something goes wrong
i learn a little more
and i remember what my priorities are

defend the water defend the land
no fracking no tar sands

(chorus)
why are we here to die?
when you had all of the fun
are we responsible for this?
are we responsible for that?
is this our home?
or are we just visiting?

THIS SONG ASKS FOR AN OLDER GENERATION TO TAKE responsibility for whats happened to this world up to this point. It poses a question to "my generation": Will we still perpetuate mistakes made by our elders if we do not listen to them or if they are not willing to share stories and lessons? It reminds us that it takes a lot of brainwashing and conditioning of folks of any age to continue the destruction of the natural world. The song hints at the possibility, that conditioning can be halted if memory (elders) rage (my generation) and energy (youth) can sit together and forget for awhile the shit that keeps these elements separate. The lyrics are a reminder that I will be a role model for a younger generation as much as I have a need to have a role model myself. And while stories are passed on, recreated, and new ones are told together the outcome is a remarkable leveling of privileges and power over so that everyone involved can benefit equally and common goals are achieved.

About the Artist: Tom Dusome is a singer/songwriter from Hamilton, Ontario known for his dynamic, personable, infectious, and generous performances. In concert, Tom often tries to include speakers, literature, and fund raising for campaigns he's working on or which are near to his heart in place of his set or before the show begins.



The Living Grey: How Do We Think About Venezuela?

One anarchists perspective of the conflict in Venezuela by Talya

AT THIS POINT I HAVE NOW HAD HEATED DEBATES WITH both far-left and far-right absolutists on what is going on in Venezuela, the former with a respected radical hip-hop singer and activist, and the latter with an anti-Castro Cuban expat living Canada. Funnily enough, the radical called me a neoliberal tea bagger, and the Cuban called me a starry eyed Che fangirl, both precipitated achievements for anyone who identifies as an anarchist.

In Venezuela we see a coming to head of all the disparate strands of history that mix up ends and means. To what extent should we seek to understand current crises in historical contexts? Or should we judge them as independent without pesky relativistic concessions? Where do we stand in a popular struggle when it seems like the choices are between a socialist dictator and a capitalist fanatic? No one wins in a choice between the lesser of two evils. The world is not black and white (or red), and Maduro[1] is proof of that grey in between.

This conflict marks the departure of ideology from politics. On the ground, ideology is abandoned completely as labels of "fascist" and "dictator" replace ones of "socialist" and "capitalist". The substance of either party is less important than what they come to mean to the population, and the future of the country takes the back seat over the question of who will lead it. In the West, we are stuck at a comfortable point in the history of Venezuelan politics where frontlines are clearly defined. Yet history is spinning along without us, towards new mobilizations that are reversed, inverted, yet still the same. Representation is defined in two ways; "the action of speaking or acting on behalf of someone or the state of being so represented", and "the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way or as being of a certain nature". In our imaginings, observations, and engagement with Venezuela, we are all seeing representations.

Venezuelan society is highly diverse, made up of Indigenous people, European settlers, African slave descendants, and immigrants. The post-independence government featured a rotation of two main parties, the COPEI (Social Christian) and the AD (Democratic Action), both populated by the affluent European settler class. These parties encouraged a unifying of society under nationalist lines, obscuring and avoiding class antagonism and excluding much of civil society from communication within the party. Rising oil prices and social spending made

1 Nicolás Maduro replaced Hugo Chávez's as the leader of the United Socialist Party in Venezuela, winning the most recent election by a 1.1 per cent majority.

it possible to maintain the illusion of a classless and accessible society, while the media and business sectors remained monopolized by the settler class.

Yet slumping oil prices in the 1970s and 1980s exacerbated class and racial divisions and it became apparent that it was no longer possible to enrich one sector without detracting from the other. In response, the country enacted economic measures sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which eliminated the fuel subsidy that affected everything from transportation to food production. Levels of unemployment, informalization, and poverty had surged, culminating in the "day that shook the country", the Caracazo of February 1989. Popular demonstrations by the shantytown dwellers in Caracas turned into a massive riot, which ushered in the National Guard and left hundreds of people dead.

Legitimacy in the government was severely undermined and hostility between the rich and poor began to intensify. This led to a decade of political turmoil and disorientation as the rate of abstention exploded from three point five percent in 1973 to thirty nine point eight percent in 1993. Society was now unwilling to be grouped into the traditional "multi-class" party structure, and new parties emerged which appealed disproportionately to the popular classes. Any utterance of a neoliberal agenda among candidates was synonymous with electoral defeat in the 1990s, and while Carlos Andres Perez was forced from office on charges of corruption and his successor Rafael Caldera battled regular demonstrations, Hugo Chavez gained support with the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR).

Chavez introduced a discourse celebrating the dignity of the Venezuelan poor, and his platform of a "New Socialist ethic" sought to redistribute resources and power among the popular masses. The 1998 victory of the MVR ushered in a number of open municipal councils, citizens' assemblies, Community Councils, entrepreneurial co-operatives, and land expropriations. Article 62 in the new 1999 constitution entrenches this new ethic, stating "the participation of the people in the formation, execution and control of public matters is the means necessary to accomplish the protagonismo that will guarantee their complete development, both as individuals and collectively".

This history presents us with two types of representation; the representation of the people by politicians, and the representation of politicians by the people. Models of political representation in Venezuela have always been flexible in meeting and co-opting the demands of the people, demonstrated by the surge of radical parties in the 1990s and reflected again in the current conflict. Yet the engagement of the people is transformative; Chavez was a product of the popular masses. Rather than being the cause of Venezuela's progressive social revolution, he was an expression of it. The popular left objectified Chavez as a concrete example of abstract dreams, and it is this object which drives the current of today's partisan clashes.

It is not necessary to describe the transformation of the MVR government as it took on more archetypal Latin features of populism and Caudillismo. Suffice it to say that the power of the elites had been steadily reshuffled within a ruling party that granted itself more and more liberties. Perhaps representative of this are some clauses in the 2007 referendum; end the autonomy of the central bank and give administrative control to the president, shorten the mandatory working day from 8 to 6 hours, and to allow the president to declare an unlimited state of emergency. I elect to leave those fifteen years from the first election to now up to imagination while I paint the picture of the current situation in Venezuela.

> Whenever we view pictures of people taking to the streets our pulse races; the sight of brave civilians using their bodies to fight repression warms our spirits. However, reactions have been different with the Venezuela riots.

There is a chronic shortage of staples like rice, milk, wheat, toilet paper, as well as medical supplies. An inflation rate of fifty percent has brought what goods are available out of reach to millions of people. Caracas has one of the highest murder rates in the world, the rate of 24,000 homicides last year is greater than Baghdad´s. Government subsidies and poor quality refineries are so expensive that the country actually has to import oil, and government owned lands are unproductive to the point where fourty nine percent of food is imported.

All this has been generally evaded and ignored by the government, the leader of which tends to expel foreign journalists who are critical of his policies and suggests that citizens should try to eat less to be able to deal with food scarcity. The nature of old allegiances can also be called into question when we observe reports that people in the civil service are mandated to attend gatherings in support of the government, and those that are decreed ¨unloyal¨ face harsh penalties. And yet the face of Venezuela that is most acknowledged by

observers in the West is the seductive revolutionary prose of a charismatic and departed leader calling George Bush "The Devil".

The electoral victories of the MVR have been won at a smaller and smaller margin. In the 2012 election, Chavez won with a ten point margin, a far cry from his previous landslides. In 2013, Maduro won with a meek fifty one percent in an election proven to be fair. His first act in office was to call in the National Guard to quell opposition protests on the eve of this victory, the first time troops have been brought against civilians since the Caracazo. This did not bode well for the Bolivarian Revolution.

Whenever we view pictures of people taking to the streets our pulse races; the sight of brave civilians using their bodies to fight repression warms our spirits. However, reactions have been different with the Venezuela riots. The left has stayed mum, denounced the protests as a coup attempt, or offered a number of analyses as apologism for objective state violence. This harks back to Noam Chomsky´s claims that Venezuela is the most democratic nation on earth while he uncomfortably addressed a tendency of authoritarianism. Our staunch political prejudices lead us to be even more divorced from the people on the ground as right-leaning spectators. It is no wonder why people say that the far-right and the far-left have more in common then they´d like to admit. My Cuban friend has recently taken to saying things like ¨for a libertarian victory!¨ while insulting anyone with a socialist lean. The hip hop activist has been accusing critics of Venezuela´s rampant crime rate of supporting police repression of poor people, while not addressing the fact that Maduro had arrested about 400 protesters. Meanwhile, Venezuelans set up barricades and the National Guard aims at civilians.

The lasting effect of Chavismo is that society is no longer divided between the rich and the poor, but is polarized along partisan lines. Aside from engaging fiercely loyal civilians, still among the lower classes, it has created an aggressive opposition from all segments of society that can now legitimately take advantage of economic unrest. The names of the combatting sides are illustrative of the superficiality of both; "the Chavistas" are Chavez-less, and "the opposition" is an indefinite hodgepodge without clear distinction or substance.

The loudest and most fervent anti-government voices in the conflict have been those of politicians with shady histories of pro-capitalist and pro-west allegiance. This has given definite color to the protests as being unilaterally anti-Maduro. However, it is merely politicians trying to co-opt genuine desires for change into political agendas, as we saw with the party overhauls in the 1990s. This is why the Venezuelan anarchist bloc has taken an impartial spectator position - because all revolutionary potential of the people for liberation from an ineffective state has been channeled into political parties. Since the people rose up in the Caracazo to demand an ear to their voice, someone has always emerged to speak for them. History repeats itself again now as we are forced to sit and watch as Maduro´s excesses are giving capitalist leaders all the opportunities to be made into martyrs and all the authority to speak from populist platforms.

The loudest and most fervent anti-government voices in the conflict have been those of politicians with shady histories of pro-capitalist and pro-west allegiance.

Many are quick to denounce the protesters as ¨middle class¨, as if this de-legitimizes the protests and negates any genuine reason for riot. The protests started as student demonstrations, like the protests in Montreal. It is shown[2] that some sections of the student movement have been nurtured by various right wing groups such as the Cato Institute, and have been in vocal opposition since the Radio Caracas Television broadcast expiration protests, the 2007 referendum, and the 2009 referendum, but the student movement is broader and more diverse than being limited to the opposition. The first student demonstrations took place to protest sexual harassment on the campus of a small college town, something that happens in every campus without necessarily being partisan. Theirs is not a right-wing protest, it encompasses all sections of la gente, of Chavez's noble pueblo, with very valid demands for a better country.

History, that which was called upon to absolve Fidel Castro, is again being summoned to absolve Maduro. But it is clear that the heir of the celebrated legacy of Hugo Chavez does not have the charismatic and empathetic force to convince the population to unify and follow him through even more concessions to an ever-distant revolution. If there was to be an organic popular uprising about the country´s many economic and social ills, it makes sense that the time would be now. And as the death toll rises to eighteen, we can see how damaging the emotional investment of a population is in the wrong hands.

Ever since the Caracazo, market-oriented reform has been unacceptable to much of the Venezuelan population. This is why it is so surprising and curious - and to some, unbelievable - that

2 Student leader Yon Goicoechea, a vocal opposition speaker in the RCTV protests, was awarded the Cato Institute's Milton Friedman Prize in 2008

SOLIDARIDAD CON EL PUEBLO VENEZOLANO EN LA LUCHA CONTRA EL SISTEMA DE DOS PARDIDOS QUE HAN DERROTADO EN EL PASADO Y DERROTARA DE NUEVO!

people are taking to the streets to protest a government from which we in the West hear so many remarkable speeches of humanistic socialism. The left has projected all their revolutionary dreams and desires onto Venezuela, and it´s hard to see them go. The Bolivarian Revolution is not working: great fuel subsidies are creating debt and inflation, and much-lauded civil collectives are empowering thugs. The government has been killing and arresting its own citizens and shutting down the internet which is enough to neutralize the past. We've got to learn a lesson from the way the "Arab Spring" seduced the Western Left into buying phrases such as ¨humanitarian intervention¨. David Hume would write about the ambivalent and discrete categories of cause and effect, and how we take as articles of faith the connection of things like 'capitalism' and 'poverty'. We lose both our convictions and our drive to act when all we have to work with is the inference of a correlation, without actually experiencing a causation.

The insistence of my righty friend and my lefty friend that I am at best ignorant of the conflict, and at worst confused, reveals of the destructiveness of ideology. We see it playing out in the molding of the conflict as a partisan struggle and not a revolutionary one. A New York Times article reported, ¨a student, his face covered with a cloth, kicked angrily at a house where a pro-government family lives, shouting at them to join the protest. Other residents rushed in to stop him.¨ This conflict is fundamentally between neighbors, not parties, and it is tearing apart a once mobilized population. For Western analysts, it doesn't matter if the president is Trujillo or Mandela. When the line is crossed, the issue is that "the people are starving", not that "the state does not make the most of natural resources for infrastructure or employment" or that ¨the opposition is made up of Capitalist vampires backed by US imperialism¨. I myself must abandon some of my own absolutism and take a phrase or two from Nietzsche - This is the "Twilight of the Idols", and we must "Philosophize with a Hammer", towards that "Dangerous Perhaps", beyond good and evil and their metaphoric incarnations in politics, and beyond history where nothing is black and white.

In an earlier time, Chavez had been deposed and detained by the powerful elite, only to be rescued by the outrage of the popular masses. Yet now, the opposition leader Leonardo Lopez has been arrested on trumped up charges, and from the street there are different voices, yet curiously the same, calling for his release. Earlier still, back in 1989, people emerged from their houses to bang pots and pans on the street, on their own, in fact because they were on their own, to make sure they were heard by the politicians that were ignoring them. And now, those same pots and pans sound, but differently, at the demand of every leader wearing colors of red, yellow, and blue.

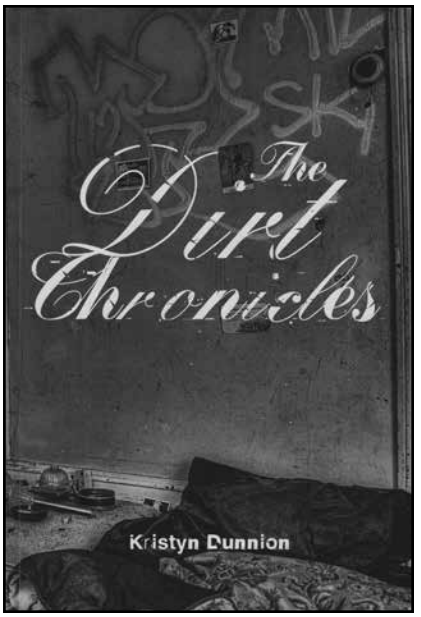
The Torre de David is a great example of the revolutionary spirit of a people free from representation. When faced with a housing crisis, citizens took matters into their own hands to develop a thriving self-sufficient anarchistic community in an abandoned and unused skyscraper. They police themselves, repair and build units themselves, and supply their own water and power, all without the government´s hand.

George Ciccariello-Maher has been an active voice on the conflict, testifying to the magnitude of revolutionary fervor that survives untainted after its strangulation and dilution by politics. He opines that the community councils, the 40,000 participatory democratic institutions, are the only way out of what is otherwise a dead end. I am less hopeful- these groups get their funding primarily from the government. This fragment from his article in The Nation is a warning of history's vicious cycle, a forecast of the dialectic, and an appeal to a new rhizomatic formation;

> "It is the point at which the Bolivarian process itself, socialism in a capitalist society, thriving direct democracy in a liberal democratic shell, cannot survive without pressing decisively toward one side or the other: more socialist, more democratic, in short, more radical. This is not a crossroads simply between two possible forms of government from above: the Maduro government or its hypothetical right-wing alternative. It is instead a question of either pressing forward the task of building a revolutionary society, or handing the future back to those who can think of nothing but the past, and who will seek to fold the historical dialectic back onto itself, beaten and bloody if necessary." △

SOLIDARITY TO THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE TO FIGHT THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM THAT THEY HAVE DEFEATED IN THE PAST AND WILL DEFEAT AGAIN!

REVIEWS



The Dirt Chronicles
by Kristyn Dunnion
(Arsenal Pulp Press 2011)
Reviewed by e.war

The Dirt Chronicles starts out as stories about unrelated folks living in unrelated cities but quickly builds into a dramatic and violent crescendo. The queer love and relationships in this book are crafted with care and respect. The themes in *The Dirt Chronicles* deal with deep emotions that stir with in all of us.

The characters that Kristyn writes are gritty, tragic, and real. They are young folks trying to make good decisions amid a world that supports a corrupt and fucked up system. Punks and hustlers, vegans and addicts, squatters and survivors, folks getting by in the Big Smoke. I found it refreshing to read about folks that don't walk the straight and narrow, that hate the pigs, who experiment, discover, and live their sexuality and folks that live in the "outer parts" of society.

In the book there is a theme that sex work (stripping, street work, and escorting) is something only folks do in times of desperation. I find this one sided. It is true that forced prostitution happens, and it is true that folks use sex as a means to support addictions, but this represents only some of the experiences of sex workers. As an ally of sex workers I find it disappointing to see the negative aspects of sex work used as a plot device. Placing the theme of survival sex work within the context of the situations in the storyline makes sense; but one cannot forget that this is only one kind of sex work among many.

Overall *The Dirt Chronicles* is a great story that validates and exposes important issues within communities living unvalidated by society. △

Burn Pile
by byron. (Self Published 2013)
Reviewed by Amber Holland

The other week I took a trip to KW which is about a half hour away from Guelph. In a car filled to the brim with my own anxiety and a sinking gut feeling of loneliness (I was on my way to do sex work in a city I had never worked in/did not want to work in). When I placed the CD *Burn Pile* by byron into my CD player, I cracked the window to let it all out. Its corny as fuck, but in the half hour between here and KW I cried, laughed and felt extremely annoyed with rage directed at police, Line 9, byrons voice and prisons. Here is a recap of the songs you will find if you pick up this gem.

Opening with a earnest and youthful song about the horror that is Line 9, this song reignited something that I wrote off as an impossible cliché years ago. The guitar in this song holds the angst and urgency I think a lot of people I know have lost with age. And in the words of byron...

> "Through the swamps, to the forest, from the mountain to the mountains to the sea... fucking with the earth...whose got the power in this final hour, wheres their castle and can we storm their tower? ...need I say more."

The next two songs, "how do you build a dream" and "how capital profits from crisis" tells the story of longing for a life outside of capitalism, state control, borders, gentrification and all that yucky shit. Painting perfectly the story many of us live, byron sings about the terrain comprised of idealism, defeat, contradictions, community, dysfunctional relationships and affinity in neat melodies, joyful noises and the occasional grunt.

All right; cue the tears, here comes "it breaks my heart". A song about watching someone you love get arrested and go to prison. Also in there is some heartfelt rage about police, infiltration, resistance, passion and prisons. It highlights, whilst also glorifying, the pitiful nature of resistance. I had someone I love dear to me go to prison for a year following the G20 protests, I remember taking the trip to visit him and always listening to this song right before getting there, and right after leaving there. It made me cry every time, but also made me feel less alone, and reminded me about how important it is to resist even at the expense of isolation, because resistance, is the only way to combat isolation... just listen, you may get what I am saying.

To explain the reactions I had to the next song I gotta first explain that byron is my roommate, this song is about the bumps that byron has on his cock. He is offensively happy to share, in intimate detail, his experience with molluscum contagiosum. This abrasively catchy song will likely warm your heart, while it aggravates mine, realistically that is only because I am sick of having to use different soaps, towels and tea tree oil than him.

"Fuck the state, fuck the dollar, and fuck the misery" for sure.

Oh yeah, smacked in the middle of these songs I described above are some lovely ditties about the library, cultural appropriation and navigating consent, all near and dear to my heart!

The last song is about an occupation against a Line 9 pumping station. This song has a camp-sing along to it and will, without a doubt, leave you yelling "fuck Enbridge and fuck the police" and possibly shedding a tear, hooting a hoot and hating yourself and your friends a little less. △
You can find the album online for free at www.archive.org

On March 8, following a week of action demanding a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women across Canada, warriors from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory blocked the CN rail line. This action, which fell on International Women's Day, came the day after the release of a Parliamentary report which attempted to dismiss and deny the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and prevent any meaningful response or action.

Four people have been charged for the action, with more arrests to come. If you would like to donate to their legal defense, check out the link below.

"Some 825 First Nations women have now been identified as having been murdered or gone missing, with a majority of those cases documented as having occurred in the past 15 years. ...We have therefore resolved that we will take whatever and further actions that are deemed necessary, to compel you to call a national inquiry into the crisis of murdered and missing aboriginal women and girls."

-Open Letter To Harper on Murdered and Missing Women



"The tears and sadness of the families left behind have not moved you to any position of compassion."

www.solidarityacrossborders.org/en/support-the-tyendinaga-arrestees

